

Reconsidering Meaning: Performing the Spaces Between the unNameable, unCertainty and Signification

A thesis submitted in partial
fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy of Arts in Cultural
Studies in the University of
Canterbury

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2010

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Acknowledgements

First of all I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to Professor Howard McNaughton for his tireless and unquestioning support, his invaluable guidance, for sharing his amazing intellect and even more surprising anecdotes and opening the door to possibility. But most of all I would like to thank him for simply accepting that I am an artist. Thank you for walking alongside me.

Doctor Anna Smith, I am indebted to you for your unwavering belief in me, your unabating support and for sharing a knowing that cannot be said in words.

My dear friend, Annie Potts, thank you for making me laugh, for believing in my artistry and for sharing a sisterhood that is precious to me.

I cannot forget Maureen Montgomery for her dedication in finding me a studio space, for backing me and listening to me.

My father, Irvine Forgan, for seeing the artist in me and simply believing it is there, for sharing your heart and your life with me and, of course, for performing the unNameable in a way no one ever else could.

My mother Susanna Forgan I cannot begin to thank for her tireless assistance in the creation of props and costumes, for her quiet, strength and support and unconditional love that never fails to amaze me.

To my dear brother Leonard who has always been my friend and whom I know will stick with me no matter how many times we disagree.

To my dear Charlotte who loves me for me and that is all I have to be, what more can I ask for? You have slaved away months of your life helping me to realize this dream and I can never repay you but I know you never expect me to.

To all of my friends, who have tolerated my neglect, my solitary ways; thank you for inviting me into your lives and for believing that I will do this. Your support and unquestioning acceptance of me is a precious gift.

And lastly, thank you my darling Fenriz for knowing me better than I could see.

Abstract

This thesis is concerned with an exploration into the reconsideration of meaning of the embodied subject whose figuration is defined as abnormal relative to the prevailing hierarchical structures of western Cartesian dualism. Evidence of the degree of subordinate representation and treatment of the marginalized body is so far-reaching and the variety of classification so extensive that it becomes necessary to frame my research within a lens whose focus isolates more specific parameters for the purposes of an interrogative and pointed analysis. This narrowing of my viewpoint of the process of absention allows more specific areas of interest to be highlighted—since this reductive convention is, ironically, both sweepingly consuming yet tends toward the categorical in its often taxonomic classification. Hence, for the purposes of this analysis, I concentrate on the representations of the body marked as animal, criminal and disabled relative to their normalised ‘other’—interrogating the overt construction of their difference and their consequent, emergent, points of similarity. This exercise not only points to their architecture but simultaneously implies the erosion of their distinctiveness as separate representations of abnormality—as well as emphasizing the contrived act of pairing them with their presupposed ‘normal’ binary counterparts.

I argue that the visualization seemingly inhering in the bodies of those absented from dominant ideological structures is necessarily limited, its fixity emerging from stultification; an othering that maintains the subject via carceral structures that are socially and politically informed. The confines of this paradigm are prescribed through a consensual ascription to a governing norm that stipulates the superiority of the artificially normalised body—thereby constructing a dualism of constraint that polices the acceptance and rejection of individual physicality—within a wider public sphere of normalisation. This is evident in the representation of the body on a cultural and political level and undeniably intersects its conceptual interpretation and lived experience in both public and private spaces. The thesis introduces a body of theory that operates on a number of levels and performs a variety of functions—none of which can be easily, or even successfully, separated from the content and role of the significant presence of performance work that comprises the final script. The latter is presented in the form of photographic documentation that links its own process of visualization to the thesis whilst maintaining an active locus of critique—produced as response to the multifaceted problematic of political and personal othering emerging from culturally inscribed figurations of animality, disability and criminality. The theoretical analysis and performance practice exist in a symbiotic relationship—creating a mutual dialectical analysis that aims to avoid the fixities inhering in the extremes of either approach. Instead, one is invited to consider the contrasts, comparisons and complements emerging from the intricacies of their relationship—thereby avoiding the redundancies accompanying their binarist opposition and by extension, the dualisms of visual figuring I have isolated for examination.

Utilizing my performative practice as a point of entry into this analysis, I have focused on the problematization of these reified representations of the body within western modalities of seeing, with a view to introducing a different space of articulation so as to encourage alternative inscriptions of meaning. This approach exemplifies my search to undermine the overriding cultural motif that maintains and perpetuates the oppression of the body marked as ‘other’. The spectacle of incarceration that western society continues to

tolerate is thereby tirelessly interrogated, with the aim of exposing the secrets whose shame, if allowed to remain hidden, will never allow for release of the abnormal body from the society that birthed its difference.

Preface

Introduction

The central aims driving this thesis are interrelated and various and crucial to their understanding is gaining an insight into the construction and conceptual progression of the chapters and how this relates to the overall structure of the script. Achieving this allows a far more complex insight into the significance of the motivations guiding this work and will become evident through a brief discussion of each chapter, the connections between them and their contribution to the thesis as a whole. I shall begin with an elaboration of the general structure of this thesis and briefly examine the significance of working as a practitioner-theorist and its direct relationship with the alleged problematic between theory and praxis. This is followed with an introduction to its main objectives and, finally, the construction of each chapter and its significance to the conceptual progression of the thesis as a whole will ensue, so as to illuminate an understanding of the construction, interpretation and intentions of this doctoral project.

Thesis Structure

When I embarked on this thesis, I aimed to produce a uniquely articulated academic project whereby two disciplines that are usually treated as distinct—that of theoretically driven cultural studies and the artistic practice of creative performance installation—have been given an opportunity to exist in discourse. This is evidenced in the structural layout of the thesis—hence the longer and elaborate final chapter 5 which documents and details the performance cycle of the unNameable that actively explores the rearticulation of signification. The first chapters build up an argument that presents the conceptual and historical conditions informing the continued spectacle of the body marked as other, including performance of difference in the present—evidenced in the sites of figuration I have chosen to focus upon. These chapters precede the discussion of my performance practice since they provide the framework for interrogation—both on the level of an overview as well as a critical exercise in challenging traditional dualisms—through discursive structures such as Foucault’s genealogies of power and poststructuralist meta-theories such as Derrida’s deconstruction of essentialism and the centre—all of which are imperative to the disintegration of pernicious dualisms. These frameworks and theoretical foundations form a gateway for the in-depth discussion of my performance practice which exists in response to these critical interrogations. Once these in-depth pieces are performed they are able to speak back to the textual structures that informed them, to continue a new dialogue of meaning making. If the documentation of their initial construction and consequent manifestation and critique were to be incorporated within the initial chapters, the very mechanism of interrogation of meaning upon which this thesis is premised would be negated. This integrative format, typical of a more traditional approach such as those emergent from a fine arts or art history doctorate, would prove unsuitable, since there is no hierarchical relationship between theory and praxis in this thesis—in fact the utilisation of this dualistic mode of analysis is consistently challenged throughout. Hence, the nature of the thesis is misunderstood on a core level if the performance documentation is demoted as

merely illustrative to the theory or the reverse occurs—the written element is seen, fundamentally, as a source of ‘explanation’ of the performative installations.

The Theory vs. Praxis ‘Problematic’

I have always had a distinct interest in the process of visualization of the marginalised body, of the mechanism of the gaze that frames the body marked as aberrant relative to social structures of normalisation. As a performance artist, the process of looking and the mechanism of representation is key to my practice—as a cultural theorist I am invested in exploring the discourses that produce ways of seeing and representing normalcy and difference. This led me to embark on this thesis project whereby I chose two distinct realms of investigation into the continued spectacle of embodiment of difference as it manifests in the body marked as criminal, animal and disabled. Since I am situated in a postmodernist framework of investigation my focus for this thesis is premised on an interrogation of the cultural processes that produce the body marked as other within a dualistic modernist structure—whose legacy I argue, is still actively engaged in maintaining this separatist model. Utilising theories of discourse and deconstruction to problematize the continued hierarchical figuring of the abnormal body, for the purposes of this thesis project I have utilised my performance practice to exist in dialogue with my critical investigations with a view to finding alternative articulations of embodiment outside of dominant structures of meaning. I aim, particularly, to find methods of re(con)figuration of the body outside of dualistic structures in the hope that the cultural processes that maintain these ways of visualising the body are dismissed and re-visualised. I do so through application of the lens of transitory performance—this situated within politically relevant contexts—so that the exercise of alternative modes of figuration can produce radical spectacle that undermines dominant modes of representation. I make use of a variety of critical discourses to inform my performance practice, the latter producing alternative modes of figuration that challenge dominant processes of visualising and representing bodies traditionally marked as other. This is necessarily radical in that it undermines the primary premise upon which these bodies are articulated—that of a social norm that accepts difference as its foundational structure of seeing.

Accordingly, the supposed theory-praxis ‘problematic’ is redundant when considered in light of the driving focus of this thesis, since the interconnectedness of theory and praxis blurs any interstices where performance ends and theory begins. The theory I draw on, for the most part, emerges out of culturally articulated contextually specific circumstances involving actual practices and methods of visualisation of the body. This can be linked to a mode of performativity; the theory that we find in response to these cultural practices is merely an extension of and critical response to this. My performance practice actively aims to not only respond to but also extend the view of these practices through a critical lens—belying the line between theory and praxis as yet another instance of this hierarchical thinking.

Aims and Objectives: Theoretical Discourses and Performative Outcomes

There are two primary theoretical discourses that this thesis intends to address. The first directs its central contribution to theories of representation of the abnormally embodied subject. Utilising both my research and performance installations I aim to successfully show that the binarised paradigm of all three of the bodies I have chosen to discuss that are persistently framed as marginal and discriminated against for their perceived difference from the socially constructed norm: that of the disabled, animal and criminally constructed body—is dismissed and alternative lenses are utilised for the production of meaning making outside of these confines. Particularly, I am looking at this in terms of the outcomes of shame and secrecy that emerge through a sense of audience complicity inhering in the persistent spectacle of the performance of difference and discrimination. Not much study has been done on the way in which performance art can address these issues with a view to finding active engagement in the viewer as participant. Part of my focus emphasises this—whereby lines are drawn demarcating the complicity of such practices by encouraging a group response of affect emerging from a sense of culpability in all participants. Significantly, the shame that they may experience on a personal or public level remains in dialogue with their relationship to the perpetuation of its secrecy. My performance practice provides an arena in which to explore these ideas—which remain theoretical as long as they operate only as ideas in written form.

Important to keep in mind here, too, is the continued interrogation of practices that the majority of the western cultural majority still perceive as acceptable and a necessary aspect of ‘reality’. This can be compared to other binary paradigms whereby a polarised dualism positing the perpetuation of hierarchical power structures has maintained hegemonic control. There is, for example, arguably still far further scope required for focus on the inequalities of bodies marked as ethnic or gender anomalous relative to the social norm regardless of how much ground has already been covered in undermining the oppressive power structures enforced in these areas of the cultural matrix. In comparison, the non-human and disabled body have not yet experienced such an extensive and wide-ranging deconstruction of their visualisation and continued representation as inferior, marked other within the majority of western social structures.

Secondly and in conjunction with the above, this thesis aims to contribute to contemporary theories of performance and performativity. The gestures and revisualization that emerge from my practice interrogate ideologies and their concomitant behaviours that continue to marginalise and abnormalise the body marked as other. In doing so, they carve the potential to rearticulate the dominant paradigm, thereby undermining dominant hegemonies with a view to finding alternative ways of visualising the body. This is done without scripting or staging as such and must occur, generally, within a context that invites spectatorial interaction and participation with a view to active change emerging from the participant’s response. This might necessitate finding locations that refuse accepted standards of aesthetic elitism such as galleries and it also must engender in the viewer an affective response so that their own complicity in the gesture becomes known. I don’t believe enough of this has been done yet, particularly in the newly emerging fields of animal and disability studies—and in the creative yet critical domain of performance art.

Crucially, my practice must remain politically and culturally informed whilst avoiding a preponderance of aestheticism and its concomitant privileged favouring of hierarchical marginalisation—emerging through practices of cultural elitism such as that exemplified in the Modernist approach to the artist/author’s didactic ‘vision’ overwhelming the spectatorial response. Whilst this has been done in various fields I do believe that

performance art, generally, is still largely confined to gallery space and other coveted politically neutralised contexts. It is still common practice, largely, for the reactive response to oppression to be evidenced in direct protest through the performance of marginality marked as ‘animal’ and ‘disabled’. Here, the differentiated body is invariably still presented as polarised other to a normative construct—whilst the form of protest follows the formulaic maxim: equality of political and ethical rights require realisation through ‘sanctioned’ dissent. Whilst these forms of protest are important for amendments to political constitutions, they do not tend to challenge the figuration of the abnormal body or point to reasons or causes for its perpetuation—such as those emerging from the shame of complicity at the realisation of one’s ideological collusion and social culpability in such acts and behaviours.

The aims, then, of this thesis are never purely theoretical—in fact for them to remain so would defeat its purpose entirely. As I state in chapter 1,

I utilise the gestural moments...from my performance practice.....with a view to finding alternative figures of signification. The purpose is... to investigate whether the possibility exists of influencing the thrust of adversity so as to highlight the need for cultural and political change...I hope to contribute to the adjustment of society’s attitudes to their construction of difference with the view of working towards a rearticulated cultural space informed by a less grossly unbalanced spectacle of carceral control (6).

Chapter Outline and Conceptual Progression

Chapter One

This initial chapter’s function is two-fold. Firstly, it serves as an entrance into the thesis on a conceptual level, whereby the mechanism of the search for meaning is introduced as well as some of the key terms and concepts that guide this process through both theory and praxis. It provides an introduction to my approach to ‘performing the unNameable’; this phrase is used to signify the process—in its entirety—of interrogation, transgression and refiguring of the abnormalised body through the irreducible combination of theory and praxis. Fundamental to adopting an approach conducive to utilising the foremost strengths of the thesis is to realise that there is not a restrictive methodology informing the manner in which one negotiates theory and praxis—in fact to adopt such an approach would be detrimental to its ultimate driving intention that seeks out alternative ways of figuring and making meaning of the body conventionally marked as other. This chapter begins laying the foundations for understanding the key mechanisms of the thesis and the manner in which these function. Integral to this is the negotiation of certain pivotal concepts which are introduced here—that of spectacle, shame and secrecy—and of course—the unNameable. Whenever these terms are utilised in the thesis they are employed with conscious reflexivity and are hence irreducible to one specific fixed meaning. Their aptitude for creating meaning is multivalent and it is in fact this shared characteristic that imbues them with the dynamism necessary to keep this type of meaning-making from becoming redundant or circular. I am referencing their capacity for metonymy and polysemy here so that the reader will engage with the thesis in a performative manner that remains absorbed and interactive. This emulates the connection I aim to encourage in

the spectator of the performance installations that emerge from this research, thereby fostering a consistent performance of the unNameable so that new meaning can continue to develop.

An example of the capacity for polysemic meaning is illustrated simply when one considers the functioning of spectacle with regards to prevalent cultural readings of the body. One might refer to the practices that absent the marginalised body as direct spectacle whose primary operation subjugates, oppresses and others those figured within the liminal spaces of abnormality. This type of performativity, although manifest in innumerable instances, always results in a reduced and closed representation of the body as the inferior element of a dualistic model. However, the performative gesture marking the presence of the unNameable emerges through a reflexive visibility that subverts dominant forces of ideological control and reconfigures jaded and repetitive signification and in the process *names* or sketches a different way of seeing.

One last but crucial feature to bear in mind when considering the employment of these concepts is that not only are they variable in meaning relative to their context in the thesis as well as their interpretation through the ideological filter of the reader/viewer/spectator, the variables of their connotations multiply as they are considered in shifting positions of power within a particular instance. Of significant interest to me in the context of this thesis is the triumvirate relationship of power that exists as a dynamic equation between the concepts of shame, spectacle and secrecy. The intricacy of their interconnectedness is introduced in the first few pages of the thesis—providing a dynamic foundational matrix to keep in consideration throughout the reading of the thesis as the many instances of shame, spectacle and secrecy are explored and interrogated within the larger sub-set of the body marked as criminal, animal, disabled—and ultimately as abnormal. As described on page 7, the concept of the secret is most susceptible to change since its very existence implies a basis in corruption or invisibility of representation. The variables of spectacle and shame remain reliant on the nature and degree of secreted invidiousness and the manner in which this manifests as actual subjugation on a cultural and individual level of the subjectivities involved. Often the mechanism of control is multi-layered and the way in which shame, secrecy and spectacle operate are not easily isolated or prised apart. This model is useful for thinking about the innumerable instances that emerge out of the two main directional thrusts of performing the unNameable: the interrogation of shameful spectacle that allows the mechanisms that marginalize the body marked as animal, criminal and disabled to remain secreted and the emergent performance of altered shame and spectacle as the practices that render these bodies as marginal and inferior and are both exposed and destroyed or rearticulated to deconstruct—in the Derridean sense—the power structures that maintain notions of difference founded on the construction of ‘the norm’.

Secondly, this thesis chapter marks the beginning of the theoretical background of the subjugated body—here marked overtly as criminal—with an outline of the history of pre-modern punitive systems of severe and overt sovereign control. The creation and perpetuation of the criminal body as locus of absencing the othered body through its figuration as deviation from the normative model provides a template that serves to support the ensuing discussion in later chapters, of the rise of further dualisms as symptomatic of the oppression of difference—evidenced in the body othered as animal and disabled. A second negatively connotated triumvirate emerges here as varying representations of the body marked as animal, criminal and disabled are investigated with a view to exposing their relationship as constructions of atypicality, and in particular, the areas of overlap where the differences between these seemingly distinctly abjured bodies become blurred. The

searches for this liminality of physical representation is key to opening further commonly conceded dualisms for interrogation—most fundamentally the founding notion of normality and its ‘opposing counterpart’.

For the purposes of the study of cultural punitive consent, Foucauldian theory operates as a highly influential paradigm for the construction of my argument and it remains one of a few central sources of reference. It is particularly foundational in its capacity to provide a useful framework for discussing the politics of power in the ongoing figuration of the abnormal body; however, to consider a primary aim of this thesis to be focussed on a contemporary critique of Foucault is to ascribe too much emphasis to this aspect of the theoretical foundation work of the thesis. The discussion of Foucault does lead the initial discussion of the workings of power in the West and so it is understandable that its importance may appear primary. But, it is precisely its basal status as a central buttress to the thesis’s framework that places it at the beginning of the discussion where it operates predominantly as an introductory background to the extensive control over the body which is then examined critically—and with particular reference to the disabled and animal body and their connectedness to the related constraints of criminality and the carceral—as the thesis evolves. Its position in the thesis is not to be confused with an ultimate theoretical position of primacy. A mistaken emphasis on reading Foucault’s paradigm as the sole template for critique of persistent oppressive visualisation of the body is therefore consistent with some of the formulaic taxonomies emerging out of a more traditionalist approach produced and held within, for example, the canonical tomes of the ‘history’ of fine arts. This reading places too little emphasis not only on other systems of thought which emerge later in the thesis as developments of ways of thinking both about the structure of meaning and its representation, it is to misconstrue and ultimately dismiss the extent of the creative performativity of the thesis’ structure. The theoretical arguments on the representation, figuration and spectacle of the abnormal body are in a dialogical and dynamic relationship with the subsequent work on my performance practice and the rearticulation of concepts such as the unNameable and Spectacle and hence do not merely operate as a series of “stepping stones” leading to the end goal of a visual art critique.

How, then, is Foucault’s work most helpful in illuminating this study of the representation of the absented and abnormalised body and the performance of shame, spectacle, secrecy and the unNameable? The Foucauldian paradigm that places power as a central concept of his genealogies and studies of knowledge is an efficient model for discussing the dualisms premised on normative figuration and its ‘opposite’ embodiment marked as inferior/other. His critical focus foregrounds complex mechanisms of control and his conception of the carceral and the mechanics of biopower, for example, help to situate my critique of essentialist figures of embodiment within a broad and informative system of power relations. It has been enormously helpful in creating a framework of critical analysis that isolates predominant structures of power and control exerted through surveillance and discipline of the body. The discipline and ultimate control of the body marked as criminal, of which disciplinary power is a focus, is analysed as the primary site of maintenance, control and discipline through pre-modernity to the present. Of crucial significance is that this ‘criminalisation’ of the body—marked through negative differentiation as hierarchically inferior relative to a normative type—is extended to the representation of embodied difference marked as animal and disabled. It has also helped to explain how the social majority, through acquiescence, allow prevailing mechanisms of power and systems of knowledge to perpetuate.

Although Foucault does highlight the need to fight against the pervasive disciplinary mechanism whilst simultaneously not returning to a system of sovereign power, there appears to be a persistent complaint against his conception of agency: that the will of the individual subject to dissent and actively resist these mechanisms of control is not given enough weight within his system of disciplinary power—this implying the system is all-pervasive and impossible to dissolve. He can be thought to overstate the extent to which individuals are subjected to the influence of power, leaving them little room to resist, this positing a pessimistic outlook for the possibility of altering this power dynamic. This would be of particular concern to me—not only as a critic in theory, but particularly as a performance artist who is focussed on centralising the representation and revisualisation of a binarised structure of embodied figuration. However, and although this is not enough to negate this problematic, in later writings he articulates a definite possibility for individuals to navigate a resistance to power relations, resulting in a clash of forces. There is then, capacity for subjective agency, but he is clear that these notions of ‘individualistic pursuit’ cannot be separated from the complexity of power relations from which they emerge. As Foucault states in a later series of interviews and conversations on this and related subjects:

I think one must be wary of the whole thematic of representation which encumbers analyses of power. For a long time, the great problem was how it was possible for the will of individuals to be represented in or by the general will...This takes no account of the complexity of the mechanisms at work, their specificity, nor the effects of interdependence, complementarity, and sometimes of blockage, which this very diversity produces. In general terms, I believe that power is not built up out of ‘wills’ (individual or collective), nor is it derivable from interests. Power is constructed and functions on the basis of particular powers, myriad issues, myriad effects of power (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 188).

This is extremely relevant for consideration when accounting for the effectiveness of my work through the performative gesture that looks to reconsider the meaning and alternative representation of the abnormalised body for a believable potentiation of tangible change—thereby performing what once remained unnameable (small lettering intended).

Chapter 2

The disabled body in the pre-modern period was largely present, ironically, in its absence—particularly regarding any prevailing documentation—the division of able/disabled bodies was not in noticeable effect and people with disabilities were still able to hold positions of power or influence if wealthy, King Richard III of England being one notable historical example. The disabled body was not separated as a site of spectacle as such. Chapter 2 references the rise of this spectacle out of Modernity, its primary premise reliant on the construction of the normal/abnormal body dualism. The language of disability and its reliance on the concept of normalcy is highlighted so as to emphasize the extent of its constructs. The Normal body is rightly reconfigured as the Normalized body—the fabrication of the concept of the Normal associated with Adolphe Quetelet who ironically based his findings on the illogical distortion of a system of statistics utilised to derive the notion of the Ideal. His formulation of *l’homme moyen* became central to an ideological focus on the notion of ‘the average

man' that accompanied an increasingly prevalent bourgeois hegemony. The medicalisation of the body emerged as a significant ideology of constraint whereby the diseased and disabled body's agency is removed and relinquished to the institution of medicine. This hierarchical division of disease/deformity versus normality, enforced by a rising middle class and their early stronghold in statistical control, in turn, complemented a surging interest in eugenics—a particularly invidious ideology which is founded on the control and ultimate destruction of abnormality and hence, disability. Here the applicability of Foucault's model of disciplinary power becomes evident as the weakness of the State is allied with the number of deviant bodies. Lennard Davis is one of the key theorists utilised in this chapter as he foregrounds the instability and constructed nature of the able/disable binary. Using this as a platform, he examines the cultural visualisation of the disabled body where difference is marked primarily through stigma and the Gaze. He also discusses the Disability Rights Movement that emerged in response to a continued absencing of the body marked as disabled from social visibility—this pertaining to both the political right and the majority of the political left whose liberalist construction of equality remains farcical in its ineffectiveness. Instead he posits a Society of Care in his paradigm of dismodernism with an emphasis on functionality. Davis' focus is pertinent to my own, specifically in my chosen emphasis on the construction of deviance and difference as evidenced in the body marked as disabled and the implications and impact of this on its political and cultural representation. His argument provides a background to my discussion, which develops a focus on the manner in which the abnormal body figures culturally in a performative sense, as an introduction to thinking about the manner in which the physically stigmatized body had come to be represented visually. This provides a framework for the performance pieces that problematize the ideology of normalcy, whereby they aim to deconstruct dominant representations of the body largely figured as disabled, animal and criminal. This development of performing the unNameable directly examines the concepts that persist as signifiers of these interrelated issues—those of shame, secrecy and spectacle—with a focus on alternative signification.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 is centred on the third site of othering—the animal body, which in most respects can easily be isolated as constructed not only separate but decidedly inferior to the governing 'norm' when the latter manifests, in speciesist terms, as the human body. The body marked as animal and accordingly segregated as the lesser half of the hierarchically defined human/animal binary sees an ideological peak at the onset of modern capitalist industrialization, spurred by the development of modern science and its preponderance on evolutionary theory and the taxonomic classification of species. In answer to this, the representation of the human form as superior to the animal as a supposed exemplar of scientific and logical truth is interrogated as the inherently contradictory nature of its primary premises are exposed. This highly anthropocentric construction purposefully blindfolds itself to the subjectivity and agency of the non-human animal whilst striving to maintain its association with normalcy. This chapter introduces an interrogation that follows a diachronic line, where the policing of the animal body on both a physical and representative level, is unveiled. As the ideologies that maintain this speciesist hegemony are exposed, its foundations begin to appear as 'natural' as the scientific explanations supporting the reduction of sentient beings for the use and abuse of human practices.

The chapter begins with a ‘disclaimer’, a paragraph whose necessity was anticipated in response to the likelihood that the inclusion of this chapter within the thesis and the concomitant highlighting of the interrelationships between the bodies negatively marked as disabled, animal and criminal, would be assiduously objected to by some. And this is exactly what did happen. It is imperative to remember that if this chapter was omitted, not only would one of the primary considerations of my thesis—that is, the non-human body that has been marginalised and oppressed as othered site of difference—be excised, the other negatively differentiated bodies that it relates to, those marked with disability and criminality, would no longer exist in dynamic dialogue with this other instance of marginalised embodiment.

This chapter outlines the history of the treatment of animals in the pre-modern and early modern periods. It begins with a deep historical account which is included due to the lack of awareness, both within academia and the larger cultural populace, of the extent of the history of abuse, neglect and general oppression of the animal body. Of those who are aware, many advocate and engage in the continued violence and marginalisation of the non-human animal body—perpetuating not only disciplinary abuse but widespread oppression through current modalities of predominantly sovereign power. Much of the current offensive against these bodies is reconfigured to suit a disciplinary model of society that barely disguises practices of brute torture. This historical account foregrounds a study of the figuring of animals in western culture and the way that they have been produced as other to human subjectivities, highlighting the direct and overriding reason for their continued subjection into modernity. This outlines their construction as ‘other’ prior to modern representations and importantly, in some key areas reveals little variation from how they are viewed today. It also outlines the beginnings of a continued trajectory of the practices of domination over non-human animals by humans, forming a continued spectacle absolutely complicit with systems of surveillance that is so pervasive it is difficult to distinguish from the broader cultural imaginary of animals. Animals are controlled in every manner that their lives cross over with humans—through the practices of the fur industry, meat industry, pet industry, hunting industry, scientific-corporate vivisection industry, and beyond. They are almost always figured as objects of surveillance and this spectacle is one of continued shame in terms of their habitual use and abuse. Chapter 3 discusses this by primarily examining the construction of animals through widespread use of rhetoric and associated discourse, exemplified in the scientific and farming industries, as accessed through the media and other public forums. It concludes the examination of the criminal, disabled and animal body as constructed tools of ideological power that serve particular cultural and political interests. As the thesis develops, chapter 4 extends the interrogation of cultural narratives of control of these chosen loci beyond discourse into the realms of visualisation and representation so as to draw nearer to a closer analysis of the complexities of the performance of spectacle, shame and secrecy—highlighting the necessity in rearticulating the unNameable with reference to the body in the physicality of its representation, containment and control.

Chapter 4

The visualisation, attendant representation and ultimately, the control over the bodies I have discussed thus far are brought together under a spotlight of interrogation into the continued depth and trajectory of embodied discrimination and difference in chapter 4. Here, the discourse of containment is opened up to reveal

the ways in which the act of looking is complicit in the coercive control of the body marked as other and invites the reader to begin the process of performing the unNameable as their sense of accountability is emphasized.

Attention is drawn to the indices of hierarchically structured power that emerge as moments of spectacle whose existence manifests as cultural anxieties of usurpation of the stronghold of power. Unfortunately this is usually only realised in hindsight when the damage to pertaining subjects has already been wrought and recompense becomes nothing more, at best, than a spoken afterthought of conscience. The balance of power, I maintain, is perpetuated through a persistent invisibility, this concealment premised on shame. I draw attention not only to the prevalence of this practice as it develops and adjusts to varied cultural contexts but to the need for its revelation, actioned through the process of exposing the mechanism that perpetuates it—stigma.

Stigma, with reference to the writings of Erving Goffmann, is discussed as reliant on the formation of stereotypes, the presiding moral judgement premised on a socially endorsed sense of undesired difference. Shame surfaces when the stigmatized subject accepts their negative differentiation as a deviant, relative to a presiding sense of normalcy. Of particular importance here is that the act of stigmatizing can rarely be separated from the Gaze, that act of staring synonymous with an invasion that produces difference, assimilating the process of visualisation or viewing with violence. It is at this point in the thesis that I draw parallels between the various bodies I have been discussing as they are produced as abnormalized difference and the methods through which their subjectivities and agency are controlled. In this discussion of stigma it becomes apparent that its presence is directly linked to the fears and prejudices of society which, when interrogated, will reveal their mechanisms of prejudice. The stigmatizer is allowed to continue delving into the privacy of the subject they impose themselves upon and this is ceded through a lack of intervention by the public. However, exposing the act of stigmatizing and its concomitant prejudice unlocks the mechanism that keeps society thus hierarchically structured. This echoes the deconstruction—in a Derridean sense, of the representations borne of society and the forces implementing the continuation of oppression are exposed. The techniques and functions of containment and absention are thus forced to surface—this process is akin to performing the unNameable—whereby governing ideologies of normalcy are interrogated with a view to renewed articulation and a shift in power.

The remainder of the chapter concentrates on various manifestations of visual practices from the onset of modernity to the present that serve to mediate and coerce particular ways of seeing that reflect dominant paradigms of power. The gaze is discussed with reference to Davis who draws attention to the glaring absence of the abnormal body in the history of the visual arts in the west despite its presiding ocularcentricism. I highlight the fact that it is not a question of whether or not limits are imposed through the meaning in images but, rather, it is crucial to focus on understanding the production of those limits so as to seek out alternative viewing structures or opportunities present in the cultural visual imagination. This requires a very engaged act of re-viewing that is conscious of its complicity so as to develop an increased sense of social accountability for barbaric practices accessed and perpetuated within the visual field of containment. Not only does this avoid apathy for the act of seeing—which has become so accustomed to simplistic and accessible gratification—it must avoid the current preponderance of standardization whose banality leads to the sterility of simulacra whose sanitisation removes the sensitivity required for acknowledgement of complicity. Consequent increased

awareness of the power of visual practices, the extent of the field of visualisation and the act of looking, encourage a renewed sense of accountability for the spectacle of oppression it continues to endorse.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 is the longest chapter and serves as both an introduction to the theoretical influences informing my performance work and its conceptual approach as well as a detailed introduction, discussion and analysis of each of the performances comprising the cycle of the unNameable. Although the reader is taken through the pieces thoroughly, they are invited to view the works from a variety of angles, none of which are definitive. The reader is not shown the final product in a glossy marketable format, rather, they are given an insight into its conceptual and performative machinations and invited to draw their own response as a viewer in retrospect to the live performance piece. Moreover, the pieces are not presented as visually illustrative manifestations of a preceding conceptual argument as would be expected in a more standardized format typified in the more traditional humanities and fine arts disciplinary schemata—their aim is to retain their aptitude as open platforms for the continuation of meaning production that enhance and guide a search for renewed signification of the previously limited and reified limitations representing the body defined as other than normal.

The chapter begins with a short discussion of the explosion of performance into the art world during the 1960s and 70s as artists explored their material embodiment as part of the process of the body's resurfacing after its oppression under the dictates of modernism. This signified a reassertion of artist's productivity as social beings, heralding the postmodern shift away from the 'transcendent' Cartesian subject of modernity where the artist and critic positioned art production and discourse outside of a socio-historic context, disengaged from its embeddedness within a hierarchically modelled society. This newly embodied subject became a locus of imminent resistance to mechanisms of power where at times the artist's body itself actualises as a site of protest. Here begins a reference to my own practice and I begin discussing the need for problematization of the fixity of the Gaze to encourage a re-imagining of the body marked as other. This body when given voice through performative gesture, is not merely reactive in protest but signifies defiant deviant alterity, reinscribing possibility of new embodied representation, resisting negative differentiation through its presence. A platform for consideration of the reinscription of meaning for the spectator-turned performer is discussed with the allusion to the functioning of metaphor and metonym. Both of these tropes when operating through visual modes of representation can be constructive or reductive—the aim in reviving the potential for metaphor to facilitate meaning production is to encourage accession to renewed, deferred meaning whilst allowing the metonymic potential of meaning to remain articulating relative to the context of the performative gesture—as it is both expressed and interpreted. Attention is drawn here to the operation of the bird puppet of the unNameable that enters and exits each performance piece, functioning as metaphor for the weaving and binding of new meaning whilst eluding fixity. The discussion of metonym here is imperative to understanding the functioning of the concepts of shame, spectacle, secrecy and the unNameable where their potential for further articulation must remain accessible.

Another important focus of my work includes a disappearance of fixed meaning in the art object; rather its signification is articulated relative to its particular relationship to context and present subjectivities. Performing the unNameable is outlined as a search for meaning outside of hierarchy, rejecting over aestheticization and commodification and emphasizing socio-historic contextualisation, the role of the spectator as active progenitor of meaning, temporality, rejection of institutional fixity with an emphasis on the presence of the body as well as an acknowledgement of ideological and social accountability.

A series of key theoretical influences are discussed both in terms of their conceptual input on an academic level as well as the utilisation of this for conceiving entry into performing the unNameable. These include Roland Barthes' emphasis on the role of the spectator and intertextual meaning production whereby the very role of the viewer becomes a performative act of deciphering the relations between codes. This relates to the undermining of singular authorial agency enabling the embodied subject's capacity for culpability as well as social and political upheaval. This echoes Deleuze and Guattari's focus on textual heterogeneity in a process of decentering pernicious dualisms that uphold oppressive structures such as art/life, spectator/performer and, of course, human/animal, able/disabled and deviance/normalcy. I point out that undermining the staticity of meaning does not equate with mindlessly 'jumbling' it—and I discuss this in terms of, particularly, spectacle and shame and the rupture of carceral control. Barthes' affective *punctum* or point of rupture—a wounding moment—indicates the propensity for affective disturbance where the image reaches out to implicate the viewer's involvement in its representation. The concept of uncertainty is emphasised not as a lack of focus but rather as a lack of resolution—the latter providing a grounding for contextualised reinvestment of meaning production. Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of structuralist western philosophy is thoroughly relevant here and provides an excellent and crucial framework for the rearticulation of meaning as it manifests as the unNameable, where the myth of the Origin and the subsequent deferral and rearticulation of difference in meaning undermines the Cartesian subject and its associated social model based on hierarchy and control—that which perpetuates the existence of the body marked as other and inferior relative to the 'norm'. Totalised form is rejected with any sense of presiding normativity outside of human intervention and this is easily conceptually extended to highlight the myth of the transcendental gaze of modernity. Derrida's play of the *supplement* provides an astonishingly useful metaphor for the functioning of the unNameable as metonym—allowing acknowledgement of historicity and the prevalence of the subject relative to governing ideology to be highlighted. This, in turn, allows for the proposal of an ethos of shared complicity instead of deferred responsibility, working against the myth of apportioning singular difference and singular blame.

The unNameable remains as a continuum of possibility, its performativity entangling seemingly distinct signifiers of difference to undermine any plausibility that might emerge from their continued opposition. The last section of this conceptual unravelling of the unNameable emphasises its key features: isolation of oppressive ideologies problematized in spaces that allow for the spectacle of marginalisation and invisibility to predominate; an avoidance of signification derived from negative differentiation, emphasis on engaging the spectator to initiate the type of response that reveals a sense of shared accountability, a revision of dominant modes of seeing that rely on hierarchical modalities of power, a definitive shift away from stereotyping and blame and an emphasis on transgressive—not transcendent—meaning towards the uncertainty that precedes rearticulation and revisualisation of the body marginalised and absented as deviant in its relation to the construct of normalcy.

The second half of the chapter—an insight into the performance of the unNameable in three distinct performance installations: *Freakshow: Performing Secrets*, *Reeler Than Real* and *Wish: About Spaces* ensues. The conclusion does not comprise a separate chapter and its concise nature should not be associated with a lack of an affirmation. That response would belie the very purpose and significance of this thesis. The conclusion is an exit that is not designed to supply authorial conclusions to an endeavour that derives its meaning precisely from avoiding fixity. Its circularity only goes as far as the next instance of the performance of the unNameable, and it is this circular structure that governs the pulse of life rather than exemplifies the death of reason—as so many modernist positivists would have us believe.

CHAPTER 1

The Spectacle and the Secret: Shame Inhering in the Creation and Perpetuation of Difference

It Quells.

It is not of the searing, burning, agonizing kind
of which familiarity allowed ready recognition—
but is rather a deeper, grating, persistent presence
—an inescapable reminder.

Stiffness becomes a torment.

Fresh sinew
the original unwavering straightness
fall prisoner to the ever-engulfing continual bondage—
consequential; inevitable.

It wearies.

Slow, imperceptible changes grind and tear at the spirit—
that which only yearns for the purest joy and strength
—still felt—
yet once not questioned.

Innocence is lost

as sleep eludes and disappointments once not imagined become real.

Solitude is felt—not sought.

Trapped within limitations whose boundaries undulate,
whose roots grow deep as the knots which tighten;
as time presses on.

Sarah Forgan, *Pain and Worry are Interchangeable*, 1996

The prevailing wind that steers the course of my recent conceptual explorations and creative imaginings has unfortunately led me to uncover a history of visual cultural practices whose fundamental structures and representation are steeped in the sadness of shame and bitter disgrace—a social spectacle that is premised on the marginalization, incarceration, brutality and the ultimate absencing of the body perceived as different from the governing ideological forces of power and control. This has led me to embark on a journey whereby I utilize the gestural moments that spring from my performance practice in an attempt to further explore the depths and trajectory of these cultural articulations with a view to finding alternative figures of signification. The purpose of this is not merely to immerse myself in the dynamic space where these happenings are realized but, furthermore, to investigate whether the possibility exists of influencing the thrust of adversity so as to highlight the need for cultural and political change. Furthermore, through the workings of my practice which are both informed by and serve to inform my conceptual explorations, I hope to contribute to the adjustment of society's attitudes to their construction of difference with the view of working towards a rearticulated cultural space informed by a less grossly unbalanced spectacle of carceral control. The latter, enforced via the dominant forces of power that impose subjugation, isolation, silencing and invisibility of the atypical body, reflects a sensibility of cruelty and intolerance that is grounded in fear and the ultimate rejection of difference. My journey begins and ends in shame and spectacle—where spectacle initiates, shame follows suit—and although the origin and end are found here, simultaneously they are found nowhere for their margins alone are impossible to trace. The factors of spectacle and its associate, shame, comprise an equation, this equation of disgrace whose continuum is read via its relationship with an instantiation of secrecy. This is a dynamic trio whose composite factors exist in contradiction—for they are directly and inversely related, the proportionality of which is marked through the relativity of their inflections to one another.

They bear one another as quietly and as smoothly as they solicit confrontation. They ask for deliverance and I continue my search for answers to the conundrum of their heritage: conundrum grounded in blood, silence and infinite articulations—of their reality—and of themselves.

The secret is the dynamic factor in the equation—the most apt to variability. The spectacle and the shame are constants whose relationship and dependency inform the values of their secrets, providing them with consistency enough to maintain uniformity, shape and substance. The secret can be unNameable or ideological—or both. Its terms appear contradictory due to its aptitude for multiple valency. But this is an illusion—for its qualifiers, though differential—are always necessarily true and grounded in the actual context of people's lives—people absented from the homogenized norms that govern society. It is the secret that is the cause—that forms the ontological basis for the material instantiation of the spectacle—and the degree and depth of the shame. Shame and spectacle share an interesting relationship, for their positions hold the potential to be transposed. This feature remains directly relational to the type, capacity and future potential of the secret. The shame that is imposed upon the subject is a form of coercion—of disciplinary control operating to suffocate any attempts at the destruction and transgression of the disempowerment and loss of agency that necessarily accompany the reduction of scope of possibility for self-autonomy of those deviating from the norm. The shame imposed by the dominant power lacks an empathic response to experience and does not know the depths of incarceration it exerts over the body and subjectivity of those who are compelled to absorb into it into their consciousness. The variety of spectacle it produces is multiplicitous and ranges from the confessional response

inflicted upon those compelled to wear it, to the lack of self conscious awareness displayed by the inflictors—who sustain it whilst continuing to absent it from themselves. This is the spectacle that becomes synonymous with normative cultural practices, the display that pretends its innocence, denying its relationship to ideological construct and forces of control. Uncovering and revealing the secret is the only means to break this trio of complicit forces that hold together the matrix of societal shame. This thesis is concerned with exploring the means to expose the secrets that maintain the spectacle, that allow for perpetuation of shame, so as to begin to rewrite the machinations of society in such a way that the history of the representation of the now deviant body will rearticulate into a canon whereby subjectivities are not largely governed by the strictures of the dominating sensibility. Absolute resolution of the latter, ironically, touts a spectacle that in essence is impossible to attain—the spectacle of perfection that is inferior prior to its birth and hence prewritten as impossibility and farce.

This thesis outlines the shame that manifests as an unfortunate consequence of the construction of the marginalized body marked as disabled, animal and terrorist—outlining the manner in which they have been marginalized relative to the governing social strictures. Not only are the superficialities of such hierarchically inferior structures exposed, the apparent separation between these bodies is also renegotiated, thereby revealing governing ideologies informing their continued representation of disconnection. If the secrets—that is, the reasons for the construction of these culturally inferior marked bodies are laid bare, we are able to see that the only real disability, animality and criminality that exists, does so within the cores of the power structures from which they ontologically derive—in an attempt to quell the voice and visibility of the bodies they secretly fear. It is here that the opportunity exists for the reflected shame of these practices to be redirected to their origin, thereby allowing these figurations alternative visibility on their terms as the balance of power is shifted.

I begin my conceptual exploration with a study of the workings of power in western society, since an understanding of this framework is essential to situate my analysis of the manner in which the Spectacle of the differential body is performed on a cultural level. The machinations and dynamic of the forces governing the figuring of the body marked as abnormal have undergone vast changes over the centuries of the diachronic development of western society and can be categorized according to two broad paradigms of cultural displays of power: the might and brute force of sovereign power and its inheritor, the coercive and more insidiously tacit workings of disciplinary power. Since this thesis is concerned with the performance of power on a cultural level and the manner it articulates in dialogue with the result of my practice: a cycle of performances that seek to rearticulate meaning through a performance of the unNameable, it is only fitting to position the point of departure of my argument with an analysis of sovereign power as it is represented in that of Aeschylus' formative dramatic text *Prometheus Bound*.

It is surely no small task to locate a closer fitting metaphor, a better suited dramaturgical instance representative of sovereign power more enduring than the figure of Aeschylus' bound Prometheus—who dwells for the entirety of the play hanging, bound in excruciating sufferance for incurring the wrath of the cruel usurper, Zeus. Not only is Prometheus cruelly pinioned to a rock in a stance suggestive of the crucifixion, his agony exists as spectacular example of the doom awaiting those daring to confront the sovereign:

SECOND

SEMI-CHORUS: I look, Prometheus, and my frightened vision
Blotted with tears, darkened with terror,
weeps your agony foreseeing
Beholding this your body abused and withered
Like a corpse rotting in chains: Oh contumely appalling!
A new helmsman has power in the halls of high Olympus.
Zeus's catastrophic might.
Usurped hurls into night
The monster lords that were before him.

(Episode 3, 21–28, 23)

It would be difficult to argue against the fact that Aeschylus' Zeus is a tyrannical figure whose absolute sovereignty is verified through repeated reference not only to his swift climb to power and repeated displays of incomparable might but to his capacity for the imposition of relentless suffering on those who would dare challenge the absolutism of his control. Yet, ironically, the primary object of his wrath, Prometheus, who is tortured unmercifully for defying Zeus in his fervour to assist those whom he would destroy—a rather wretchedly depicted humanity—was instrumental in assisting the unseating of his father and predecessor, Kronos. Prometheus reveals too, that his own manacles are not eternally set, evidenced through his prophesied overthrow of the despot. Despite the overt representation of Zeus' unmitigated power, the king of the Olympians, it is revealed, remains subject to the workings of Fate, and is ultimately destined to fall, his defeat manifesting through the seeds of his own paternal line. Ultimately, it can be argued that it is Fate that exercises true sovereignty—rendering useless not only the feeble will of man, but that of the gods, puppeteering their 'autonomy' within the assured hands of predestination. Prometheus' torment remains as inescapable as his final release:

PROMETHEUS: It is written
That I should suffer, and as best I may
These bonds and this dark destiny accept
In servitude to iron necessity...
Giving to man magnificent resource
Myself I serve the iron will of fate.
I am the huntsman of the mystery,
The great resource that taught technology,
The secret fount of fire put in the reed
And given to man to minister his need.

This, this is the error for which night and day
Nailed up beneath the sky I must still pay.

(Episode 2, 18–31, 22)

Granted, the play concludes with Prometheus' impassioned cries to his mother Earth as the most pained victim of injustice as he tumbles, still bound, into the abyss—directly succeeding Hermes' admonition that his punishments remain the fruit of his own design for his absolute disobedience to the sovereign. This argument against fate, whilst remaining an undercurrent throughout the play, does not serve to undermine the message that ultimate power lies beyond the grasp of the most mighty—Zeus re-throning Kronos' seat—all the while deprived of the foreknowledge—the predetermined means to his own end. The measure of chance, indeed the chance of possibility is mocked within a universe of battling tyrants whose suffering appears as inevitable as the changing hand of power. Aeschylus displays a powerful message in his tragic representation of *Prometheus Bound*, presenting a protagonist as bound to fall as he is bound to defy. Io, here represented as the Wandering Woman, provides a particularly poignant figure of unwarranted suffering and wanton decree—even knowledge of her fated final destination—to bear the son of her oppressor, who shall finally crumble the throne of his father, does nothing to soothe her, destined to wander ceaselessly until the dawn of the fated day. Whilst Prometheus' plight remains the pinnacle of incarcerated torture, her destiny is equally cruel, tormented by a demonic driver that prods and goads her twisted body without cessation. Her deformity and her punishment—both consequences of her defiance of Zeus' lascivious intent—render her form all the more liminal through the animality of its disability (*Prometheus Bound*, Episode 9, 36). Although her exit is preceded by a deranged outburst in the face of her own horrible fate, expressing a desire to destroy herself and in so doing cut blunt the hands of fate, the implication persists that such release is unachievable—that suffering is a tragically necessary element of this world.

The question of the inevitability of suffering is perhaps ultimately unanswerable—at the least with the assurance an a priori certainty allows. One does not have to believe in the mysterious workings of fate or ponder the vicissitudes of a benign or malignant god in order to come face to face with suffering. Some, mirroring Io, cry out for release from the injustices of sufferance meted through perceived fatalistic forces—theirs is not acceptance in quietude. Theistic doctrines espoused by the beneficent currents of monotheistic belief-systems—such as those found in the more compassionate interpretations of Christianity—articulate relief of suffering through the form of a saviour. Christ was arguably consensually bound to agony though, one could argue, even he wondered at the workings of his sovereign father—being fated, too, to endure torment and hence to bear man's suffering at the hands of his father. It is not difficult to draw a parallel between Prometheus and Christ as they both are bound and tortured, made to suffer in spectacle—in aid of mortal man and his contention with sovereignty. Whether this power is conjured through an autonomous god or the omnipotence of all-knowing fate, or perhaps in a simpler, still brutal godless world, one fact remains clear. Those with exceptional bodies, with bodies that are not representative of the source or perpetuation of power, have experienced the knowledge and consequence of subjugation. Those with exceptional bodies who already exist on the borders have consistently found themselves on the receiving end of the unforgiving grasp of the inescapable clutch of

power that forces them to negotiate the status of their body relative to that from which they are excluded. Those who are bound to find their bodies insistently reduced to prisons, whether through the forces of sovereign power, a certain wave of cultural articulation or even—if it is possible—apparently locked within their own private experience, are bound, moreover, to grapple the question of suffering and its relation to power.

A contemporary study of power would be found wanting without, at the least, a careful consideration of the extensive focus on the subject evidenced in the writings on Michel Foucault—whose work cannot adequately be absorbed outside of his analysis of the production of truth and knowledge. Of great primacy to this project is his challenge to the status of the conditions necessary for the production of truth claims. The systems of knowledge that Foucault takes particular issue with are those related to social processes—of which medicine and the human sciences are central. Due to the reliance of these systems on “the densest and most complex field of positivity” (Foucault in McHoul and Grace, *A Foucault Primer: Discourse, Power and the Subject*, 58) the conditions for truth production are more unstable yet, ironically, their proponents are often first to pronounce ‘truths’ about humanity (McHoul and Grace, *F/P*, 57–58). Foucault states that the conditions that produce these knowledges imply an economy of power relations in a symbiotic relationship of mutual benefit and dependence: power and knowledge are correlative and constitute one another (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 27). In one of two lectures he gave on power and knowledge later on in his career, he further elucidates his point, whereby he refers to the production of truth inhering in the functioning of discourse:

In a society such as ours, but basically in any society, there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterise and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse. There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operates though and on the basis of this association. We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth.

(Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, 93)

Foucault’s objective is primarily a practical one: to expose the political and strategic nature of the economies of knowledge presumed to operate independently of power—particularly as it occurs in the human sciences—and its obscure and at times hidden connection to the political institutions found in criminology and sexuality (McHoul et al, 60).

Alphonso Lingis provides a valuable insight into the writings of Foucault, particularly on his work regarding the body and its relationship to power. He emphasizes the structures in place in contemporary western society that objectify the body through the imposition of various techniques of power within a plethora of institutions of confinement—that give rise to manifold discourses centred in the disciplines of the social

sciences and social technology (Lingis, *Foreign Bodies*, 53). In speaking of the coding of the body one should not be drawn into a simplistic and inaccurate reading of Foucault, as some critics mistakenly pursue, that sees the body merely as a passive vessel of domination and control through various methods of enforced docility. His emphasis on writing from a historical materialist perspective reveals Foucault's complexity as he articulates the manner in which power is generated; as different uses are found for the formation of multiple power dynamics, further elaborations of discourse become possible. Technological and social power is assumed by those that seize hold of it as social space is filled with a multifaceted network of relations, a power operative whose functioning is without initiation or finality as its complexities overlap and interlock as they yield and submit, wield and enforce. Although the susceptible are subjected to various forms of control, enforced docility and constraint, the movement of power is never simplified into a flow from oppressor to victim as they mutely absorb their plight; rather—evasions, ruses, mockeries and resistances indicate the intricacies of these power relations whose discourses dwell in perpetual movement characterized by directional change (Lingis, 54). This is not to say that wounds are not inflicted, that pain does not result from these workings of disciplinary power. What is of utmost importance is to understand its complexity, working primarily through institutions within the social sphere, as a development away from and existing in stark contrast to its predecessor, the simple, brutal hierarchical enforcement of sovereign power (ibid).

Europe's ancient regime typified the display of sovereign might, whereby bodies were tortured and sacralised as operations of power to produce discourse in the name of the sovereign, who in turn was considered the material representation of God. The body of the accused receiving torture for his crime became a representation of the king's vengeance against insurgents challenging his authority, the physical evidence of that retribution operating as a signifier for guilt. This functioned to produce a confession, enforcing the apparent truth of his dissent from dutiful obedience. The exacting of the torture was highly publicised—the victim was mutilated, humiliated, castrated, maimed and killed as an actor in a very public theatre, the latter constructing a theatrical arena that produced pain as spectacle—the horrific result that would emerge if one threatened the potentate (Lingis, 54–55). This “saturnalia” (Lingis, 55), this extreme spectacle of tortured confession eventuated in a deliverance whereby the criminal was transformed into a legendary hero through his sufferance. The display of the redeemed hero, accompanied by an empathetic public response to the wanton display of corporeal suffering, unsettled the autonomy of this monarchic enforcement of authority through physical displays of cruelty, leading to a decrease in such overt spectacle over time (Lingis, 55–56).

A radical change heralded movement into modern punishment techniques in Republican Europe—the spectacle shifting from the grand spectatorship of royal might exerted over citizen insurrection, to the hands of the people—hands ruled by stringent social contract and law. These strategies were labelled ‘rational’ by their proponents in their pointed, limited, controlled, non-dramatic materialization—and ‘reasonable’, in their seeming sanction by the body politic. Major shifts had occurred in penal strategy, swiftly implemented since the onset of the Republican regime. Particularly, the intensity of the force of corporeal punishment meted out in specific circumstances where regicide was perceived, dissipated—and was replaced with a gradational punishment schema whose object and materialization existed in practically limitless extension (Lingis, 56). During the era of supreme sovereign rule, punishment was horrific, intense and spectacular and specifically recognized as a transgression against the sovereign body and its tacit representations. However, the new era of

production, privatization and owner-directed commercialization, of rising bourgeois wealth and fiscal increase, required new punishment measures to be drafted (ibid) to accommodate the new vastness of possible indiscretions against the citizen whose burgeoning assets served, largely, to burden their vulnerability. Although not necessarily practiced, this new will of civil rights claimed to extend beyond those who controlled it—the newly rising middle class—to the poverty stricken and state supplemented civic—who could not afford the taxes to ensure their own protection.

Power, when introduced as a phenomenon to be distinguished historically, maintains its contextual differentiation and subsequent contingency on the sociopolitical factors that inform it—a significant point often lost on critics of Foucault (McHoul et al, 63). Foucault applied the phrase ‘ontology of the present’ to the process of revealing the historical conditions producing the truths informing the employment of power relations within society. He was referring, particularly, to the exercise of finding new methodologies for analyzing conceptions of power in modernity—this necessarily requiring detachment from previous long-standing conceptions of the latter (McHoul et al, 60). Foucault claims that a primary, if not defining feature of modern society involves the government of both individual and composite biological needs in an overarching control and regulation of life processes:

For the first time in history, no doubt, biological existence was reflected in political existence; the fact of living was no longer an inaccessible substrate that only emerged from time to time, amid the randomness of death and its fatality; part of it passed into knowledge’s control and power’s sphere of intervention. Power would no longer be dealing simply with legal subjects over whom the ultimate domination was death, but with living beings, and the mastery it would be able to exercise over them would have to be applied at the level of life itself; it was the taking charge of life, more than the threat of death, that gave power its access even to the body.

(Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*, 143)

Two largely dominant conceptions of modernity are challenged through this assertion. The first is the Marxist view of modernity which posits capitalism as the economic structure underlining the ongoing struggle of power relations between the bourgeoisie and working class (McHoul et al, 62). It is a widely-held, common mistake emerging from modernity, Foucault posits, that elevates the ideals of the consciousness and the soul over the reality of the body in the exercise of power. He distinguishes himself from Marxist and Para-Marxist perspectives who attempt to elicit the effects of power at an ideological level (Foucault, *P/K*, 58). The prioritization of ideology presupposes the classical philosophical model of a human endowed with a consciousness which power is presumed to seize upon. Furthermore, whilst Foucault does acknowledge that Marx’s writings do include an awareness of the effects of power on, particularly, the worker’s body, Marxism as a historical reality tends to occlude the issue of the body and power in favour of questions of its effect on consciousness and ideology (Foucault, *P/K*, 58–9). The Para-Marxist approach, Foucault argues, over-

emphasizes the repressive qualities of power, thereby ironically rendering it more fragile in its singularity of censorship and exclusion—in the pure negativity of its existence. Essential to Foucault’s thesis on power is his emphasis on the productivity of its existence in modernity, admonishing the tendency for it to be described in purely negative terms: “We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of modern power in negative terms: it “excludes”, it “represses”, it “censors”, it “abstracts”, it “masks”, it “conceals”. In fact, power produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth” (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 194). Knowledge, too, is produced in this system, whereby entire bodies of information, in the form of discourses, are formed (Foucault, *P/K*, 51). This point extends to include the limitations of a structuralist approach, which, through its “sparing methods and monotonous tactics” (Foucault, *H/S*, 85) remains undifferentiated in its positive manifestations within an all too vague cultural totality (McHoul et al, 65). A system of power relations thereby becomes intelligible via the techniques through which it is exercised within a system of differentiation devoid of the totalizing forms exemplified in displays of sovereign power and the fixities of the Marxist and Structuralist models.

The second conception of modernity Foucault challenges is that promulgated by Max Weber and the early Frankfurt School which critiques the depersonalizing effects of instrumental rationality—which they claim is modernity’s characteristic feature. Foucault’s conception of the rise of a new mechanism of power expands on these models, cementing power as a complex dialogical system of processes that are not separable from social systems, nor reducible to the State or to any secondary effects of this system—such as scientific rationalism. He provides distinction through separating the new mechanisms he argues for from the simpler more overt spectacle of sovereign power that preceded it:

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we have the production of an important phenomenon, the emergence, or rather the invention, of a new mechanism of power possessed of highly specific procedural techniques, completely novel instruments, quite different apparatuses, and which is also, I believe, absolutely incompatible with the relations of sovereignty.

(Foucault, *P/K*, 104)

What is of great consequence here is that, due to the fact that power is not merely localized within a single apparatus, challenging the State in the hope of overturning or revolutionizing it remains insufficient for altering the social power dynamic. Within Foucault’s conception of modern power “the mechanisms of power that function outside, below and alongside the State apparatuses, on a much more minute and everyday level” must also be changed (Foucault, *P/K*, 60). Foucault’s new conception of power emphasizes the necessity of bodies and their labour for its mechanism to function:

This new mechanism of power is more dependent upon bodies and what they do upon the earth than its products. It is a mechanism of power which permits time and labour, rather than wealth and commodities, to be extracted from bodies. It is a type of power which is constantly exercised by means of surveillance rather than in a discontinuous manner by means of a system of levies or obligations distributed over time.

(Foucault, *P/K*, 104)

The new system of power produces entirely new discourses—for example a highly extensive discourse has been produced in modernity on crime and criminality that is the modern judicial and penal system of coercive control. Imperative here, is that the techniques of power which give rise to these discourses are supported within the archaeologies of knowledge and are productive—in order to manifest and justify their own ends (*P/K*, 48): “It is ultimately dependent upon the principle, which introduces a genuinely new economy of power, that one must be able to improve the force and efficacy of that which subjects them” (Foucault, *P/K*, 104). Foucault refers to this technique of power relations as the exercising of disciplinary power.

Through Foucault’s writings on the changing technologies of power, discussion of the operation of shame and secrecy emerge in his account of the shifting relations of dominance and control at the onset of the transformation from the overtly public displays of cruelty evidenced in sovereign power, to the less visible more insidious workings of disciplinary power. This was highlighted by the disappearance of torture as a public spectacle at the end of the 18th Century whereby direct punishment of the body was replaced with a far broader and more complex system of control, as bodies were punished through removal of their liberty and their conversion to docility (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 7). The criminal body no longer figured as a site of violence, but instead became a locus for carceral control. This system reflected a broader cultural consciousness of docility whereby the regulation and containment of bodies occurred through coercive acquiescence of the system of containment. The body no longer figured as a major target of penal repression (8).

In accordance with this altered visualisation of judicial control, the theatricality of the rites surrounding execution came to be considered increasingly suspect: “as if the punishment...exceed[ed] in savagery the crime itself” (9), leading the public to perceive the executioner as a criminal and the condemned perpetrator, in an odd reversal, as the subject of pity. Punishment thus became the most hidden aspect of the punitive process (9). Utilising this new mechanism, the seat of the power of punishment is transferred through its certainty, as opposed to its “visible intensity” (9)—and violence is acceded to as a necessary and consistently publically inaccessible end. This, Foucault argues, leads to a revised apportioning of blame; where once punishment as spectacle verified the strength and morality of the State, it increasingly shifted the shame of violence onto the executioner. With the removal of spectacle and the replacement legal trials and sentencing, the conviction is the shame publicly asserted over the criminal as he is ‘found guilty’. His execution operates as an additional shameful ‘necessity’ that Justice imposes on the condemned and hence it is kept distant and secreted from the public eye. Concealment, Foucault argues, absolves the justice system of responsibility and the associated shame (9–10).

In modern systems, the criminal is not so much punished as ‘corrected’, cured or improved—the entire rhetoric, according to Foucault has shifted so that the justice system is seen as a necessary solution to solve the problems of criminality and hence undeserved punishment, thereby, is increasingly accorded a stigma of shame. The overriding sense is that a fair sentence is entirely possible and that the justice system is capable of doing thisⁱ.

The ‘rationale’ of the new penal code exemplifying disciplinary power emergent at the beginning of the 19th century, emphasized heightened differentiation whereby for each newly articulated transgression, a suitable punishment was contrived—the punishment finalizing when suitably deemed reform was exhibited. The body of the offender becomes the primary canvas for the writing of the disciplinary code, the living signifier displaying the new system of correctional regulation (Lingis, 57). The newly implemented ‘legality’ of juridical power served, as Lingis shows, merely to mask burgeoning structures of hierarchical power which Foucault identifies as those subjected through disciplinary social technology whereby bodies are enclosed and segregated within various institutions. Each institution is mapped according to its purpose into a series of functional operations that run in potentially limitless parallel or consecutive segments of time, these manoeuvred and controlled through bodies representative of the rationale of the State. These bodies of docility are not abjected in the absolute servitude typified through the mastery displayed under sovereign power but, rather, are commanded through the “tacit calculus...distributed in the gridded space as interchangeable elements in a table of ranked subordinations” (Lingis, 59). Whilst this type of discipline that Foucault articulates is designed to develop and encourage aptitude in the sense that the body functions efficaciously within the system, there is no sense of individual power and no real opportunity to wield one’s own aptitudes outside of the larger operative (Lingis, 58–59). Power then, is displayed through the body’s submission to docility and in its aptitude to be influenced. The diseased, leprous body became the first body to be confined in Europe and signalled the implementation of a system that developed into the modern medical institution as the post-Plague disciplinary archipelago rose to dominance with the disintegration of feudal law. For the purposes of my thesis it is interesting to note this fact, that the practice of confinement—what was to dominate modern social technology—was built on the foundation of the segregation of the maligned body, othered through its dysfunction, as Lingis reveals: “The institution of a power that assigns to each individual his place and fixes each individual in the capacities and malady of his body, first appeared in Europe in the methods of force the public authorities marshalled to deal with the plague” (Lingis, 59).

The prison’s renewed vision of incarceration came to replace the diverse collection of punishments that had originally been drawn up in answer to the multiple transgressions identified under the new European penology. The new conception of the prison, typified by the theorists of the Walnut Street Prison and Ghent Workhouse did not merely operate to limit movement, activity and agency and impose isolation—as the previous more simplistic dungeon structure was designed to do. The new prison interrogated and neutralized political insurgents, producing disciplined, reformed bodies, socially reconstituted as an echo of the model of Christian rebirth promulgated by the Quakers and Enlightenment theorists (Lingis, 60–61). The Walnut Street Prison—possibly the first penitentiary in the world—introduced solitary confinement to penological history, deriving from the Pennsylvanian Quakers and their belief in penitence and self-examination as a means to salvation (Schoenherr, Steven E. ‘Prison Reforms in American History’, 30 March 2009). Removed from society, the bodies of the inmates are reconstructed over the duration of their sentence, producing various effects

on the prisoners, leading to further differentiation based on their ‘criminality’. Lingis elucidates, citing various studies on the effects of the penitentiary as a disciplinary apparatus on the inmates:

One part will be marked and individuated to the point that they will be able to function outside prison...another part—the statistically largest part—will be made into delinquents...who, when released, enter into careers in illegal activities. Finally, one part will make careers of being convicts within the prison.

(Lingis, 61)

The modern prison functions in effect to create a new society of criminals whose indiscretions are not a sleight on their profile but, rather, constitute it.

Bentham’s Panopticon operates as a literal embodiment of a system of surveillance exemplifying Foucault’s conception of the carceral that regulates and controls bodies as effectively as it implicates those hierarchized within their own system—the threat inheres in the possibility of detection, surmounting the actual autonomy of observation:

...the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its actions; that the perfection of power should render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this (architectural apparatus) should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers.

(Foucault, *D/P*, 201)

The Panopticon is a symbol of modernity’s ‘humanised’ transformation from the brutal displays of retribution meted out under the oppressions of sovereign power—with a view to reforming the criminal’s soul or self whilst retaining carceral control of their body. As Foucault explains in his interview with Brochier, a turning point in history is marked by the realization that it is both more efficient and more profitable to place people under surveillance than to enforce some socially exemplary penalty. Inherent to this was the project of creating a prison system designed to ‘transform’ individuals. Incidentally, he argues, this was designated for disaster since the prison space functions to multiply and promote the efficiency of the criminal—a space of recruitment to build a population of social delinquency (Foucault, *P/K*, 49–51). Accompanying and complementing the mechanisms exemplified through a system of surveillance emerged a system of techniques Foucault refers to as ‘disciplines’, devised and maintained in order to implement a successful government intended, largely, to effect the normalization of the bodies that comprise its fabric.

These “projects of docility” (Foucault, *D/P*, 136) work on individual bodies with implicit, though constant, coercion supervising the behaviour of the body in a subtle manner, monitoring and controlling attitudes and movements rather than the more demonstrative signifying elements that would require more overt displays of control (Foucault, *D/P*, 136). Included in this discourse on the criminal, of course, is a widely-held social fear of the delinquent. This produces, in turn, tolerance of the controlling presence of the police—to effect the normalization of the criminal body through subduing them into docility. Foucault convincingly argues for modernity’s tolerance for the constant surveillance the police presence enacts:

This institution of the police, which is so recent and so oppressive, is only justified by that fear. If we accept the presence in our midst of these uniformed men, who have the exclusive right to carry arms, who demand our papers, who come and prowl on our doorsteps, how could any of this be possible if there were no criminals? And if there weren’t articles every day in the newspapers telling us how numerous and dangerous criminals are?

(Foucault, *P/K*, 47)

Lingis makes some interesting observations regarding the production of delinquency and its relationship to the society that perpetuates it. He refers to the manifold nature of its manufacture, drawing attention to the fact that its presence is not limited to prison apparatuses; rather, it exists in multiple penitentiary enclosures wherever the disciplining of bodies is underway—within accepted social spaces. Delinquents, then, are not the marginal others of an otherwise docile citizenry, they constitute it, maintained through the structure of the disciplinary state—they are no less liminal than those imposing continued control and surveillance (Lingis, 62–63).

The emergence of these disciplines, argues Foucault, marks an historic birth of an art of the human body that produces skills—albeit through intensified subjection in a process whereby increasing obedience marks increasing utility—implicating the body within a “machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it” (Foucault *D/P*, 138). The constrained and disciplined body, therefore, is one whose docility is gauged according to the relationship with the closely connected attributes of enhanced domination—thereby both diminishing the body’s force through obedience—whilst increasing its aptitude for utility (Foucault, *D/P*, 138). In his discussion of sovereign power, Foucault refers to a juridical form of power exercised as a means of deduction—“*prélèvement*” (Foucault, *H/S*, 136). This, essentially, comprised the right to seize—possessions, labour, time and ultimately, life itself. The disciplinary power that emerged as an outstanding trait of modernity, Foucault argues, altered, moreover, the right to death through its “life-administering power—” (Foucault, *H/S* 138), operating as a reversal not only of the right of the sovereign to allow life but also of the social body to maintain and develop its life. This is evidenced in the plethora of wars emerging out of the nineteenth century and beyond whereby entire populations are annihilated en masse on behalf of social ‘survival’. Effective killing, manifested through socially sanctioned wars, ironically provides proof of the

ability to 'live' as a preferable replacement to the individualized 'cruelty' of juridical power (Foucault, *H/S*, 138–139). Foucault divides modernity's developing forces of power over life into two distinct though not antithetical categories. The first concentrates on the body in its capacity as a machine—its usefulness, scope for optimization and integration into systems of productivity and docility—in short, its capacity for discipline, what Foucault refers to as an "*anatomo-politics of the human body*" (Foucault, *H/S*, 139). The second is concerned with the body of the species—as base for biological processing and the workings of life—birth, death, longevity and health supervised through a series of interventions and controls Foucault refers to as the "*bio-politics of the population*" (Foucault, *H/S*, 139). Both forms of power, he argues, are attendant to investing in the processes of life through discipline and subjugation of populations of bodies, this marking the era of what he refers to as "*bio-power*" (Foucault, *H/S*, 140). The vast majority of the anatomo-politics of the body is regulated through the supervised control evidenced particularly in institutions enforcing coercive dominance—of which Bentham's Panopticon is exemplary. Far from being purely ideological, these two forces, once combined in the nineteenth century, manifested in the meeting of concrete arrangements forming a great technology of power (ibid). The techniques of power that existed and operated through a diversity of institutions, significantly, Foucault outlines, were directly influential over the development of capitalism through their functioning in the economic arena—this directly related to increasing conditions of segregation and the construction of social hierarchy, widening the gap of inequality whilst promoting hegemonic growth of industrially, economically powerful forces (Foucault, *H/S*, 141). Although Foucault acknowledges that this is certainly not the first emergence of the influence of the biological over the historical, he does emphasize that it was the first notable movement, in the West assuredly, that biological existence showed overt reflection in political existence. Using the term "*bio-history*" (Foucault *H/S*, 143) to refer to the manner in which the actions of life are engaged with the events of history, he inscribes bio-power as that which brings knowledge as power explicitly into the workings of human life (*H/S*, 143).

Of direct consequence to the theory of the dispersion and workings of disciplinary bio power is that of a growing trend of normalization, subduing the system of juridical control in its wake. Distribution of power within a closely regulated society requires the more detailed workings of a system that does not gain its dynamics through spectacles of sovereignty. As Foucault so clearly elaborates:

Such a power has to qualify, measure, appraise, and hierarchize...it does not have to draw the line that separates the enemies of the sovereign from his obedient subjects; it effects distributions around the norm. I do not mean to say that the law fades into the background or that the institutions of justice tend to disappear, but rather that the law operates more and more as a norm and that the judicial institution is increasingly incorporated into a continuum of apparatuses whose functions are for the most part regulatory. A normalizing society is the historical outcome of a technology of power centered on life.

(Foucault, *H/S*, 144)

Foucault's study of madness and the birth of the prison provides an analysis demonstrating that at the initial stages of industrial societies a system was erected that separated the 'normal' and the 'abnormal'—this accompanied by a specific punitive apparatus. This historical analysis retains its coherence from a logic of oppositional strategies that gives rise to the mechanisms of power in order to understand the archaeology of the human sciences—of which discipline and normalization are necessary conditions. Modern medicine, Foucault argues, is the common denominator in the process of normalization within the human sciences: "It was in the name of medicine both that people came to inspect the layout of houses and, equally, that they classified individuals as insane, criminal, or sick" (Foucault *P/K*, 52). Sally Thomas, mother of Alex who was diagnosed with cerebral palsy and had to spend a long time in hospital with her son speaks of the confining nature of the building, that resonated strongly with the carceral: "All of that time in hospital, it gives you a bit of a feeling for what it must be like in prison and then being let out in the real world again. Your life begins to revolve around what's happening within those four walls, the same routine every day. You don't think about the things that are still going on in the outside world" (Thomas, S in Busch, *The Man With No Arms & Other Stories* 64).

Freud, for example, and his legacy of psychoanalysis, was hugely influential in the process of normalization (Foucault, *P/K*, 60–61). The *normalizing judgement*, emerging as a device of normalization, is a particularly invidious form of social control since individuals are constantly measured on a scale ranking their ability, utility and dysfunctionality relative to everyone else (Gutting, 84). One's very existence presupposes being written into the system that constrains as long as it contains.

Instead of, as one might predict, producing conformity, the forces of disciplinary power tend to encourage the articulation of difference—in fact, Foucault would argue, this is where the notion of a 'personality' derives (Foucault, *D/P*, 193). A multiplicity of competing personalities emerges therefore as another legacy of modernity—accompanied with the associated demand for recognition of difference (McHoul et al, 72). The production of the individual, ironically, emerges as one of its most notable effects:

The individual is not to be conceived as a sort of elementary nucleus, a primitive atom, a multiple and inert material on which power comes to fasten or against which it happens to strike, and in so doing subdues or crushes individuals...the individual, that is, is not the *vis-à-vis* of power; it is, I believe, one of its prime effects.

(Foucault, *P/K*, 98)

As Foucault has shown, the practice of surveillance is fundamental to the analysis, identification, codification, discipline and subjection of the body. In fact its presence is designed to neutralize transgression prior to its occurrence. Interestingly and in keeping with the system, a paradox of individuation arises within the stronghold of sameness. For although the subject is made to be docile—hence undermining his agency—he retains individuation through the examination achieved through surveillance, whereby his unique records serve

to circumscribe his institutionalized identity. This systemized record-keeping encourages the formation of norms as minimum and maximum capacities and aptitudes, recorded through the surveillance of a disciplined society, providing extremes with which to formulate values related to the performance of the monitored body. Individuality of the subject, then, does not inhere in agency, personality or sensibility but only through the manner in which they are coded relative to their place within the hierarchy. It does not even emerge as any relation to an ideal—an ascription to a transcendent towards which the individual may strive. In light of the distinction Saussure made between *meaning* and *value* within a semiotic system, the individuality of the singular subject within the disciplinary regime is meaningless. Meaning, in the sense of the designation of a referent, is subsumed by a system that determines attributes defined according to their distribution in relation to the norm—the latter merely a gross average of variations. Value, in Saussurian semiotic terms, is ascertained relative to that with which it can be compared and contrasted—to the terms with which it can and cannot be substituted. (Lingis, 59–60). The attributes of the individual within the system of docility are highlighted only in their capacity as similarity and difference when measured against other individuals and, most significantly, how easily they can be exchanged and replaced.

Accompanying the Panopticon as a technology that functions smoothly within the workings of disciplinary power is that of the confessional which, according to Foucault, is particularly relevant for the relationship between sexuality and power—but certainly not confined to it (Foucault, *H/S*, 63). As McHoul et al point out, in contrast to its inclusion within the penitentiary-based practices of Medieval Christianity, its use within modern secular institutions is aimed at producing a discourse of truth of the subject—by the subject—regarding the body and life-processes—essentially a scientific discourse directed particularly at sexual practices. The confessional is an essential technique of bio-power whose versatility allows for its deployment far beyond the reaches of the state apparatus (McHoul et al, 79). As Foucault explains in his *History of Sexuality*:

The confession has spread itself far and wide. It plays a part in justice, medicine, education, family relationships, and love relations, in the most ordinary affairs of everyday life, and in the most solemn rites; one confesses one's crimes, one's sins, one's thoughts and desires, one's illnesses and troubles...in public and in private, to one's parents, one's educators, one's doctor, to those one loves; one admits to oneself, in pleasure and in pain, things it would be impossible to tell to anyone else, the things people write books about...Western man has become a confessing animal.

(Foucault, *H/S*, 59)

He emphasizes that the ritual of the confessional is never devoid of a power relationship, whereby the party maintaining the role of the highest power occupies the position of authority requiring the confession—it is he who advocates and expects it and who assumes the position of chief overseer presiding over the consequent judgement, punishment and/or possibility for forgiveness and reconciliation (ibid, 59).

In contemporary times, prisons remain the focus of the disciplinary nation, all the while representing one of its central failures. Although constantly multiplying and enlarging, failure perpetuates as the number of 'criminals' rise and the 'need' for their incarceration builds. Furthermore, a disturbing reinvention of the torture practices Foucault consigned to the mire of the pre-modern periodⁱⁱ, to the spectacular display of monarchic power is emerging, accompanied by the other methods advocated during the 18th century for controlling criminal behaviour—sequestrations, property seizure, raids, entrapment (Lingis, 63). Crime—and punishment it seems—is alive and well despite the seeming progress the rational world reveals in. Foucault asserts that in keeping with the mechanism of the disciplinary system, the strength of the initial claim to power can be, if not reversed, at least maintained in its capability to re-organise and redistribute its forces (Foucault, *P/K*, 56). The suffering of the body is not merely a progenitor to affliction and disempowerment. Particularly it is through endurance that the body reveals its strength and retaliation—perhaps in the form of "mockeries, evasions, ruses and even posthumous subversions" (Lingis, 63). Whereas the torture victim received deliverance and possibly righteousness through his final sufferance, the disciplined body that has endured numerous forms of coercion has undergone change, and it is in that newly acquired state of knowing, that rebellion, resistance and stubbornness are born to seek reprisal. It is an active awareness, a materiality that cannot be reversed. Lingis asks whether this endurance is able to manifest in a form other than subversion of the existing disciplinary system, in a space of creation where one does not relinquish agency and expression to these current techniques of power.

Foucault, I could posit, might reply simply that the current system is beyond subversion—that a reversal of totalitarian power is simply not possible even if it were desirable. The system is never static due to the lack of fixity inhering in the power dynamic, this fluidity a necessary component of its complexity. He may respond with the notion of the marginal, his replacement concept for the more simplified idea of the radically othered subject, exemplified in a victim consigned forever to the confines of a strictly censured and monitored lunatic asylum. The marginal exist on the fringes of mainstream society, yet for the most part are still considered an integral part of it—sharing attitudes and social and economic roles with the status quo (Gutting, *Foucault: A Very Short Introduction*, 88–90). Their position on the borders of society are multiple and variable. Factors such as holding values or following life practices differing from the mainstream, or marked and marginalized as physically different by the majority, all prevail as forces of subordination imposed by the dominant sector. However, in contrast to the 'mad' individual, designated to suffer in sequestration without guarantee of cessation of their plight, the marginal represent values and concerns that can meaningfully challenge and perhaps alter those of the status quo, with the capacity to effect meaningful political and social change. Society therefore, maintains the capacity for meaningful alteration without complete revolutionary overthrow. Foucault insisted that the marginal voice is not uttered through the mouth of the majority to avoid its subsumption within the tidal wave of the norm. The marginal voice exists to effect reform, to point out the potential problems and drawbacks of the majority with a practical goal in mind—change. They are not merely the possibility of social improvement but the measure of its manifestation and should never become assimilated within the majority even when their voices are heard and needs are met. Society, when seen in this light is dynamic and self-transformative. Foucault's conception is indeed a promising one and offers a real solution to an otherwise unsolvable social and political inertia. The questions remain; how practical is it, how achievable are its aims? Again, we can refer to Lingis' question. We can accept that these factors are necessary to maintain social balance and improvement—to move away from the primitivism of juridical sovereignty and the

confines of militant institutional control. But, is it feasible? And “Who is there to teach such an art?” (Lingis, 64).

This thesis comprises an investigation of that question, comprising a journey that documents the exploration of some of the most brutal displays of the ongoing oppression and subjugation of the abnormally marked body that remains subject to the continued forces of dominance and control emerging from the prevailing forces of socially sanctioned power. I have focused my attention on the paradigms of difference that I feel reveal the most outstanding displays of the spectacle of oppression manifested via the perception of difference, or deviation from the governing norm—the body that prevails as exemplary of the ideologies and values of the status quo. These are the bodies whose continued neglect, abuse and discrimination occupy the extremes on the differential of social hierarchy—the bodies that feature as inferior by virtue of their difference—or who exist in such a state of subjugation that they exist in negativity, through their absence.

Through a cycle of performances which I have termed ‘Performing the unNameable’, I have isolated various ways that these othered bodies—specifically those marked as disabled, animal and criminal relative to normative structures of figuration—are commonly represented. This has led to a focussed search for alternative articulations or ways of seeing these bodies that differ and defer—echoing the play of the Derridean deconstructive supplement—from the prevailing ethos of the norm. I have employed a variety of methods of refiguring these bodies, representing a performative problematization of their commonly perceived fixity within the social stratum. I have shared my creative visions with an audience whom I have invited to join me in this refiguring of meaning, this probe into the possibility of alternative approaches to the lens of the gaze that remembers, at least, to deny the inclination to stigmatize and objectify and thereby acknowledge the reality of their complicity in the articulation of difference. The spectacle shall always exist and its secrets will continue to inform future instances of shame. I am not harbouring any utopian illusions of monumental change—this can only be effected on a global scale through the committed investment of vast numbers of people and entire populations. But, I can, at least, make a start and hope that others will join me in this pursuit, this exploration of the elusive and sometimes magical, unNameable.

CHAPTER 1. Notes

ⁱ When I speak of shame and secrecy in the thesis, I articulate shame and its associated secrets as manifesting not only from state-based institutions, but also those that factor in the running and maintenance of the market-based economy whose practices are premised on profit and the complex interrelated forces of imperialist power whose methodologies/machinations often blur the boundaries between seemingly outdated actions of sovereignty and those of disciplinary control.

ⁱⁱ This can be evidenced, for example, in the revelations of torture of the modern western war camp, such as those now commonly acknowledged to have occurred at Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib. This is explored in my performative cycle in *Freakshow: Performing Secrets*.

CHAPTER 2

Disability: Insidious Myths and the Performance of Power in the West

Science may have found a cure for most evils; but it has found no remedy for the worst of them all—the apathy of human beings.

(Helen Keller in *Disabled World*, 25 July, 2009)

For myself I'm glad we got to know Alex as Alex, just as we did James. That we got to know him as a person — thought of him as a person first — rather than as a disabled person.

(Thomas, S in Busch, *The Man With No Arms & Other Stories*, 66)

I had a marriage, a job and now a child. It was like the world was my oyster. I held those three things right up there shining bright, It was like once I'd achieved those milestones, I felt whole. I felt human — like a man. If I'm honest I guess I always felt I was competing against able-bodied men. It's not that I have a competitive sort of nature, it's more like I felt I wasn't on an even par.

(Roome, S in Busch, *The Man With No Arms & Other Stories*, 32)

One could quite convincingly argue that the shocking display and treatment of the disabled body is a spectacle unmatched in the history of the representation of the human form—governed by a secrecy directly influenced by dominant normative discourses whereby the workings of power manifesting through the broader socio-cultural framework is one of the most grotesque instances of othering and marginalization in the history of western exclusion. Absented, silenced, hidden from view, it has only generally materialized when viewed through the lens of conformity as an abhorrent other—that which is untouchable and hastily expelled as the body we are not. Yet the body, as we shall see, is far from perfect—the latter refers to an unreachable essence constructed to defer the reality that perfection is as unattainable as Godliness. This is the travesty promulgated by the binary of ‘perfection’ and disability—the shameful construction that masks the fear held in secret by those maintaining the reins of political and social control. Of absolute necessity is the imperative to dismantle the foundations upon which this spectacle is built, so as to seek out a different lens through which to view the body—allowing that which was once marked as necessarily inferior in its disability, to remain solely an historical myth.

Lennard Davis has been widely recognized, both within academic circles and beyond, as a groundbreaking theorist for problematizing ableist notions of disability and their concomitant reductive hierarchical framing of the disabled body as marginal other—the singularly defective extreme of social deviance commonly subjected to pity, scorn, hate and, perhaps worst of all, indifference. His work is seated in a problematization of the reductive coupling of the ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ body that arises out of modernity. This simplistic construction relentlessly perpetuated within the discourses of social institutions that pathologize, legislate, industrialize, criminalize; of textual and visual frameworks that represent and cement commensurate with the ableist prerogative, is revealed as Davis emphasizes the instability and *possibility* the concept of disability presents.

Davis’ primary aim in his later work, evidenced in his collection of essays *Bending Over Backwards*, is to extend the concept, removing it from its liminality, thereby rearticulating it as a civil right for all and severing ties to discrimination based on embodiment (Davis, *BOB*, 1). He outlines the initial importance of redressing the lack of knowledge and interest in social, cultural and legislative issues affecting people with disabilities within the wider public, whom appear to presume that disability issues remain irrelevant to their lives. Although the reasons for such attitudes are complex, one extremely pertinent one is that ‘disability’ is perceived to be the one identity the average ‘normative’ individual is loathe to embrace, even within the margins of the far left—the irony of this blatant in that it is the one identity we are most likely to inhabit before we die (*BOB*, 2–4). Davis’ argument develops into a repudiation of situating disability amongst the other identities that have come to inhabit this space in the multicultural project of postmodernism. Although he maintained the need for disability to stay a separate identity when initially embarking on disability studies, his later work shows a disavowal of this approach—due to the porous nature of the notion itself and its aptitude for metamorphic change. He refers, rather, to a politics of what he terms *dismodernism* (*BOB*, 5). This albeit admittedly utopian approach (*ibid*), offers a different more ethically charged rethinking of disability and identity and shall be discussed in more detail later on.

Davis embarks on an explanation of the various terminologies he employs throughout his writing—adjectives, nouns and their phrases and similar modifiers are never used frivolously in a political discourse fraught with value judgements and differential markers that seep out of the social structure that birthed them. He

states that the term ‘disabled’ is problematic and was originally employed to replace the term ‘handicapped’—the latter undergoing a series of semantic shifts centering on the concept of contestation. It is only in recent times that it has come to represent an unfairly burdened individual as opposed to a superior competitor weighted down to equalize their performance. ‘Disability’ is in fact an older term and initially signified lack of ability in a general sense, whether fiscal, physical or legal. The term ‘handicap’ Davis asserts, arose particularly within ableistⁱ establishments to link the inability to compete fairly with impairment—as opposed to ‘disability’, which is a broader term that developed alongside a more complex discourse (Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy*, Preface, xii–xiii).

Other terms are sometimes preferred by people with disabilities over ‘disabled’. ‘Differently abled’ has been used by some but this term tends to be non-specific since, it can be argued, everyone is differently abled in a multiplicity of various spheres of being and doing. Some prefer ‘person with disabilities’ since it is less reductive than ‘disabled person’—whereby the individual is reduced by the latter term as a primary descriptor. For some, including Davis, ‘disabled person’ is a term used particularly by the ableist society and therefore avoided by people with disabilities and those critiquing systems of normalcy (*EN*, xiii). ‘Disability’ is still a term widely used by people with disabilities and so I agree with Davis that this term is still acceptable to use in the context of a critical discussion. Davis also uses the term ‘temporarily abled’ in the same capacity as he uses ‘normal’—to problematize the notion of normalcy and emphasize further the instability of the abled/disabled binary. Later, due to criticism of his use of the word ‘normalcy’, he makes a distinction between the largely Americanized descriptor and its apparently preferable British predecessor, ‘normality’—not without noting the irony at being criticized for using ‘abnormal’ forms of the root word ‘normal’. In fact, he emphasizes the enforcement of procedures of normalization, of which language is an obvious example and argues that the social process of normalcy accompanied linguistic standardization under the banner of nationalism (*BOB*, 101–105). He differentiates the two terms, referring to normality as the allegedly socially constructed, physical state of being ‘normal’, whilst normalcy denotes the “political-juridical-institutional state that relies on the control and normalization of bodies, or what Foucault calls “biopower”” (*BOB*, 106–7). In this manner, what might be construed only as a product of prejudice, as a more singularized trait of oppression that forms a distinction between and casts a negative judgement on normal and abnormal bodies, ableism reveals another once invisible discourse of oppression to feature amongst other more familiar discourses such as sexism and racism—that indicate the changes in culture and ideology indicative of the legacy of Enlightenment thought and modernization. Furthermore and in keeping with this largely Foucauldian conception of the complex economies of power, the ableist inferior—the disabled other—maintains the capacity to avoid the limitations of a purely oppressive discursive structure that perpetuates the victim status of the othered subject, implying that further movement and dynamics can emerge to rearticulate possibilities for change in seemingly fixed social and cultural constructions (*BOB*, 107).

Davis makes a valid point, increasingly as his argument develops—that the category of disability is an extremely unstable one. This assertion is contrary to common belief-systems and practices in the West which continue to regard disability as a discreet category devoid of variability—that is, that one is either disabled or one is not (Davis, *EN*, 1).

Much the way coded terms used to signify skin tone are representative more of an ideal than a colour, so too are the categories dividing the ‘impaired’, ‘disabled’ and even the ‘diseased’ vulnerable to disintegration under scrutiny. Disability, he emphasizes, exists primarily as a historically constructed discourse, a specific ideology of thinking about the body that includes every embodied person capable of sensory perception and, it serves to regulate ‘normal’ bodies at least to the same degree that it does ‘disabled bodies’ (*EN*, 2). Davis’ argument serves to show that normalcy and disability exist as necessary constraints of the same system. He points to the fact that not long before his initial groundbreaking text was written, disability as a subject remained contained as a discourse written and maintained by professionals treating ‘the disabled’ as objects of their study and apparent expertise. The resultant information he asserts, “...produced and constituted a discourse as controlling as any described by Michel Foucault” (*EN*, 2), which remained rigidly medicalized in its orientation towards the care, treatment, management and institutionalization of the disabled. Typically, this discourse failed to acknowledge its position in the economies of power and control and hence its assumptions and its agency remain dehistoricized. The foundational aspect of Davis’ study rests on the idea that the discourse of disability requires understanding and analysis to reveal the social, economic and historical processes that regulate the framing of the body in culture. This includes the mistaken idea that disability is underpinned as a biological status. As I go on to discuss later in the chapter when referring to the construction of normalcy, the regulation of the ‘disabled’ body coincides with other aspects of social control, such as the systematization of criminalized, gendered and subaltern bodies. Exhibiting a marked difference from their modern heirs, preindustrial societies incorporated people with impairments within the main social matrix, albeit through less than commendable methods whereas postindustrial societies, argues Davis, segregate ‘the disabled’ through the discourse that has been used to define them (*EN*, 2–3).

Davis refers to the concept of the disabled moment in his aim to rethink disability—using ‘moment’ in a philosophical sense to think of descriptors such as ‘blindness’ as modalities rather than as disabilities. In doing so, Davis separates the attribute from a timeframe in order to de-narrativize it and separate it from what Bakhtin referred to as a chronotope. This, argues Davis, avoids the act of sentimentalizing impairment through associating it with bourgeois individualism and the latter’s tendency, particularly within literary texts such as the novel, to produce the subject of the narrative as a hero or victim or marginalized love interest (*EN*, 3–4). Through this process of defamiliarization, Davis does not aim to depersonalize disability but rather to remove it from the discourses that couch the term in cliché.

Davis asserts that in order to understand the concept of the disabled body in culture, one should focus on the construction of normalcy prior to the construction of disability—the former has produced the latter. Contrary to the assumption that ‘the norm’ is a condition of human nature, he argues that it emerges as a feature of a particular type of society (Davis, *EN*, 23–24). He shows that the word ‘normal’ as “constituting, conforming to, not deviating or differing from, the common type or standard, regular, usual” enters the English language around 1840 (*EN*, 24). Similarly, ‘normality’ appeared in use since about 1849, ‘norm’ in 1855 and ‘normalcy’ emerged around 1857. Hence, one can argue, the idea of the norm enters the English consciousness over the period 1840–1860 (*EN*, 24). Davis locates the concept of the ‘ideal’ as a likely progenitor of the ‘norm’ and the hegemony of normalcy. The ideal body—a mytho-poetic body such as that visualized in classical paintings and sculptures—is linked to the gods (for example, Venus) and is hence a divine amalgamation of a set

of exemplary physical idealizations necessarily unattainable by humans since no one body can manifest such a combination of perceived perfection. Importantly too, he points out that there was no social expectation to attain this form as it was commonly acknowledged to exist outside of the realms of human potential (EN, 25).

Of inverse relation to the ideal is that of the grotesque—which came to symbolize, ironically, the people. As Bakhtin, Stallybrass and White, Davis and others show, the grotesque was transgressive in its life-affirming inversion of political hierarchy. This concept permeated culture and operated as a signifier for the norm—in stark contrast to the modern connotation of the disabled—which has come to represent the excluded, abnormal bodily form (EN, 25).

Beginning in the early modern period, Statistics emerged for the first time as a political arithmetic for the compilation and promotion of ‘well informed’ state policy. Its use in context of the body is attributed to Bisset Hawkins who defined medical statistics in 1829 as “the application of numbers to illustrate the natural history of health and disease (cited in Davis, EN, 26). Davis shows that it was the French statistician Adolphe Quetelet who most actively contributed to a generalized idea of the ‘normal’ as an imperative where he theorized the statistical outcome of the average man—*l’homme moyen*—a physically and morally average construct (EN, 26). The formulation of *l’homme moyen* in turn, justifies *les classes moyens*—it is here that scientific discourse is used to justify the middle-class ideology that accompanies bourgeois hegemony, Quetelet apparently influenced by Victor Cousin’s analogy between the average man and the *juste milieu* (EN, 26). This sentiment was also gaining popularity in England where the middle class sought a valid rationale for their placement at the centre of the order of things, for their association with the notion of the norm (EN, 27). Paradoxically, this striving towards the medial becomes a quest for an ideal—one which Quetelet extends beyond the moral fibre to the body as site for perfection—whereby great deviations come to indicate ugliness, sickness and vice (cited in Davis, EN, 28).

Another significant theory of the body that rose during the ascendancy of the middle classes veered away from the notion that disease and health were opposing states—rearticulating disease as a significant deviation from health, the measured norm. This theory of moderation rose in tandem with the bourgeois ideology appraising medical values and norms and constructed a rhetoric that described disease in terms of agitation: ‘excessive’, excitable and ‘irritated’ whilst a healthy condition implied more quiescent states (Davis, BOB, 112). Davis makes an interesting observation, in line with the earlier observations of Susan Sontag, that a continuity of metaphor is constructed here between the human body and the body politic, just at the time when the rising middle classes were actively engaged in dissolving the threat of agitation to their normalizing ideologies through revolutionary actions and insurrections (BOB, 113). Political signifiers are thus ascribed to certain bodily states and vice versa—it becomes clearer how those that deviate from the norm, the ideal of the time, are admonished, rejected and reviled. The structures of power are present within a variety of interlocking discourses that inform and influence one another’s consequence. Also, as Davis shows, control and utilization of one’s agency is adversely affected in this new continuum of health as the body and disease are assessed, diagnosed and treated by someone other than the patient. The medical expert removes one’s autonomy over one’s body through their superior professionalized knowledge and then assigns institutionalized treatment to the body—governed always by the ideology that these practices are justified in their capacity as ‘normal’ and therefore, self-declaredly correct (BOB, 114–115).

Quetelet actually envisioned the norm as a type of Utopian progress, whereby the idea of civilization and the perfect human form are strongly associated (Davis, *EN*, 28). Davis relates this concept of striving for the average as it is applied to the notion of the human to the writings of Marx. Davis points out that one of Marx's primary concepts—that of labour value and the related idea of the average wage, depends on the construction of the average worker (*EN*, 28). The collective work day of a large faction of workers can be divided up to produce “one day of average social labour” (Marx, cited in Davis, *EN*, 28) and Marx's average worker is defined relative to the socially constructed extremes of wealth and poverty. Albeit Marx worked against the hierarchical system of capitalism, the abovementioned ideas he promulgated attest to an ascription to the enforcement of normalcy regarding distribution of labour and wealth (*EN*, 29). The replaceable, interchangeable worker's body whose prominence and presence rose with the development of industrial capitalism is of normal, average ability—and is “able-bodied”—another benchmark that the disabled body measures unfavourably against (*BOB*, 111) as the construction of normalcy increases its profile of hegemonic control.

The standard Gaussian bell-shaped curve—otherwise known as the ‘normal distribution’ or astronomer's ‘error law’ holds through its very nature, the majority of the population under the arch of its curve, staving off any deviation—such as those deemed physically abnormal—to lurk at its extremes (*EN*, 29). Davis points out that practically all of the early statisticians were also eugenicists. This becomes intelligible when one realizes the association they both derive from—the idea that the population can be normalized (*EN*, 30)—the State controlling the process of normalization through the pursuit of eugenics. Both pursuits produce the abnormal body as deviant, and hence, the disabled body falls directly into this category. As Davis points out, these pursuits remain profoundly and inherently paradoxical given that the idea of normalizing the statistics which exist as deviations in order to produce the majority norm is logically irresolvable (*EN*, 30).

Sir Francis Galton was one of the key figures in the early eugenics movement in Britain and cousin to Charles Darwin, whose primary thesis concerning the survival of the fittest cemented the central tenets supporting the eugenics project, as Farral elucidates: “Eugenics was in reality applied biology based on the central biological theory of the day, namely the Darwinian theory of evolution” (Farral in Davis, *EN*, 31). Darwin's theories support the idea of the disabled as defective on an evolutionary scale, thereby encouraging the eugenic fixation with their elimination—including those deemed feeble-minded, deaf, genetically and physically incongruent and frail (*EN*, 30). Of further interest in terms of the connection with identity and the body, Galton constructed the modern system of fingerprinting for proof of personal identification. As Davis articulates, Galton's system linked the fingerprint with identity as a signifier of one's physicality—a type of serial number inscribed on the body. Davis convincingly suggests that this systemization of the body suggests the human body's standardization is embedded in its corporeality—that its identity is essentially unchangeable and by extension, cemented in its position on the bell-curve. Physical difference, of the type that can be scientifically proven, moves closer and closer to a synonymous relation to identity (*EN*, 301–2). Of further consequence, particularly to my argument, is the fact that the practice of fingerprinting became and is still closely associated with deviance, in fact the criminalization of deviance is of major import hereⁱⁱ—the practice of fingerprinting came to be associated with deviants who wished to hide their identities (*EN*, 32).

Galton exacted further massive influence over the construction of the norm in his desire to perfect the statistics of the human race. He faced a large obstacle through the fact that many of the characteristics he wished

to tout as desirous were in fact extremes which fell on the edges of his ‘normal distribution’ scale. Tallness, for example was closer to perfection than average height, yet fell on the opposite extreme to shortness; the latter considered a definite negative trait deviating from perfection. He solved this logical annoyance through substituting the concept of mathematical averaging with that of ranking—altering the object of the curve from focus on the mean to the median. Avoiding the inevitable plurality of majority characteristics, Galton’s new graphing system ranked certain chosen extremes at the top of the human scale of perfection, devaluing others below the norm with equal vehemence. He managed this by splitting the original Gauss distribution curve into quartiles, of which the fourth denoted the highest rank. The altered graph structure, termed an *ogive*, comprised an ascending curve whose desired traits accumulate at its peak—and whose deviations dwell at its foot located in the first and weakest quartile—whereby the value of 0 becomes representative of the middle value, of mediocrity. As Davis shows, Galton was attempting to redefine the notion of the ideal with regard to humanity. The idea of the norm makes provision for the underdog, the deviant; the average variation of the body is then placed within an ever-constricting template of standardization, this serving as a concrete precursor to the splicing of the distributive curve of the population, creating a new ideal so as to radically alter the focus of human achievement—inscribed in close relation to the stringently normalized body (Davis, 33–34). A radical revision of social ‘improvement’ was thereby born, seeded from the concept of normalcy: “The new ideal of ranked order is powered by the imperative of the norm, and then is supplemented by the notion of progress, human perfectability, and the elimination of deviance, to create a dominating, hegemonic vision of what the human body should be” (Davis, *EN*, 34).

The ideas promulgated by the eugenicists were not, as Davis shows, a marginal project but were embraced by many Europeans and Americans and persisted well into the twentieth century (Davis, *EN*, 35). Multiple of disabilities were hence grouped together with a number of other human variations—whose common denominator culminated in their contribution to the “disease of the nation” (Davis, *EN*, 36). This emphasis on the state of the nation is imperative in understanding the construction of normalcy with regards to the relationship between the body and the state—the number of deviant citizens is directly proportional, according to the eugenics argument, to the weakness of the body politic and the country as a wholeⁱⁱⁱ (*EN*, 36). The rise of the concept of the norm accompanied the rise and dominance of western democracy—driven by the ideal notion that the government is founded by a representation of the norm, the majority, all of whom are a collective of equal subjects, whom, for all of their individuation, elect their representatives as purveyors of normative sentiments and predilections. With reference to this representative democracy of normalcy, Davis coins the term ‘normocracy’—which he rightly states are really the same form of government (*BOB*, 110). With reference to the work of Canguilhem, he emphasizes that democracy is reliant on the notion of the average citizen and this ideology, indeed, is the same one upon which bourgeois capitalism rests. The conceptualization of equality within this ideology relies on the myth of the standardized body, rather than financial parity, since the latter would eliminate the system itself. Equality here is not ethical, its illusory status is based on the quasi-scientific methods promulgated by statistics and the likes of Galton and the eugenicists—seated upon his distorted rule of the normal and deviant body (*BOB*, 110–111). Davis argues that a critique of normalcy must, in fact, include a critique of the notion of equality, since the ethical space of the latter is a masquerade of that which it professes, manipulating bodies and their affects behind the self-same ruse that perpetuates its opposite (*BOB*, 117).

Particularly disconcerting for people classed as disabled during the rise of eugenics was the problematic that all traits classed as undesirable were generalized and grouped together, so that the ‘unfit’, according to leading eugenicist Karl Pearson, included the “habitual criminal, the professional tramp, the tuberculous, the insane, the mentally defective, the alcoholic, the diseased from birth or from excess” (Pearson cited in Kevles (1985, 33) in Davis *EN*, 36)^{iv}. Often these classifications were grouped together beneath the label ‘feeble-minded’, which even went so far as to include pauperism as a defective signifier of the deviant, incompetent worker (*EN*, 36). Disability, conflated with depravity, became included in the ‘defective class’ which, optimistic eugenicists hoped, if the “knowledge was applied...would disappear within a generation” (cited in Kevles, in Davis, *EN*, 37). With Galton receiving a knighthood in 1909 and the eugenics movement peopled by the likes of Winston Churchill, Theodore Roosevelt, John Rockefeller and H. G. Wells (Davis, *EN*, 37), eugenics became an alarming force to be reckoned with, backed by an alliance between medicine and the state. In Britain, parliamentary bills were passed to exert control over mentally disabled people and in 1933 the Nazi’s proposal for sterilizing the disabled to stave off inherited diseases was approved by the acclaimed scientific magazine *Nature*. A point that should be remembered that Davis makes clear is that Hitler’s abhorrent eugenics policies were merely an implementation of those views widely held amongst American and British eugenicists: “the State...must proclaim as unfit for procreation all those who are afflicted with some visible hereditary disease or are the carriers of it; and practical measures must be adopted to have such people rendered sterile” (Hitler, cited in Blacker, 1952, in Davis, *EN*, 38).

Since he was so massively influential over scientific and later, cultural thinking, it is germane to mention Freud’s influence within the eugenics movement, over which he held great sway. His work’s influence was only able to reach its extent due to its basis in the idea of normalcy. Sexuality, long denounced as a primitive instinct was, in Freudian terms, considered normal—perversion being a displacement thereof (Davis, *EN*, 38–39). The existence of psychoanalysis depends on the concept of normalcy, neuroticism springing from a deviation in that normal development—the psychoanalytic response acting as the corrective measure to reform sexual normalization. Davis rightly shows that Freud’s project constructs a system of mental eugenics whereby normal functioning is contrasted with pathologically abnormal, at times even criminal, sexual dysfunction (Davis, *EN*, 39).

For the purposes of my thesis it is worth mentioning Davis’ focus on the literary text in the construction of the norm. He traces the first depiction of an attempted normalization of an individual in literature to the 1850s and Flaubert’s novel *Madame Bovary*. An attempted revision of Hippolyte’s clubbed foot is attempted in the name of progress, whereby both a call to nationalism and his work productivity are emphasized—despite the fact that the quality of his performance has never been questioned. Issues of animality arise here too, where his name (and, I would argue, his *equinus deformity*) write his identity as animal and Other, that is, a deviation from the norm (*EN*, 39–41). As both animal and other, his marginalization is doubled on the hierarchy of a human scale of supremacy. Davis argues that if one accepts that novels arose as a social practice to enable the production of bourgeois hegemony, that the form, the plot and character development of the literary novel “promotes and symbolically produces normative structures (Davis, *EN*, 41). Whilst the heroicism of the main characters is maintained, Davis shows that disability inevitably occupies a minor role, where it is used to arouse a multiplicity of responses ranging from pity to abhorrence and fear. Therefore, he argues that the novel does

not merely embody contemporary social prejudices of the time but that its very form tends towards an ideological normalcy augmented by resolving plot structures and mainstream characterization. Furthermore, he asserts that a major goal of the novel is to reproduce semiological normalcy to reiterate its presence in the world as actuality (*EN*, 41–42). The centering of values regarding the body, gender, ethnicity and race is symbolically reproduced, articulating the defective other that lurks in the marginal spaces of social exclusion (*EN*, 42). Whilst it is not my purpose to embark on a major critique of the novel form, as Davis continues to do in his discussion of Zola and Conrad amongst others, it is relevant to consider as a form of creative representation that operates in stark contrast to the performance of the body in a cultural sense in the language of everyday life.

As my discussion evolves, I will go on to discuss the manner in which the abnormal body figures culturally in a performative sense, as an introduction to thinking about the manner in which the physically stigmatized body has come to be represented visually. Furthermore, my performance pieces are centred on problematizing the ideology of normalcy, whereby they aim to deconstruct dominant representations of the body largely figured as disabled, criminal and animal. Not only does my thesis concentrate, therefore, on exposing the constructed nature of these traditionally socially marginal bodies, but the methodology of my analysis is aimed at enlightening the awareness of the reader—just as it is aimed at the spectator in my performance practice, to an understanding of the arbitrary nature of these categorizations.

Davis rightly contends that it is custom courtesy within the intellectual left to stringently criticize instances where racism, sexism or classism emerges within the discourses they are engaged in. Yet, he states, and with this I am inclined to agree, the issue of disability has more of a tendency to leave a trail of silence in its wake—this particularly wanting given the enormous amount of criticism that has already been devoted to the social construction of the body as marginal and other. He states, in fact, that the silent figure that remains in the unfashionable shadows is far more transgressive and deviant in its ‘status’ as disabled (Davis, *EN*, 4–5). This is precisely because popular discursive theory is biased towards an ableist prerogative—Davis is scathing in his criticism of the ignorant exclusivity of the framing of the body as it is theorized by the ableist left:

The body is seen as a site of *jouissance*, a native ground of pleasure, the scene of an excess that defies reason, that takes dominant culture and its rigid, power-laden vision of the body to task. The body of the left is an unruly body: a bad child thumbing its nose at the parent’s bourgeois decorum; a rebellious daughter transgressing against the phallogentric patriarch. The nightmare of the body is one that is deformed, maimed, mutilated, broken, diseased...Rather than face this ragged image, the critic turns to the fluids of sexuality, the gloss of lubrication, the glossary of the body as text, the heteroglossia of the intertext, the glossolalia of the schizophrenic. But almost never to the body of the differently abled.

(Davis, *EN*, 5)

As Michael Bérubé iterates, referring to Davis' mention of the concept of disability as a sideshow, disability is a deflection of a group of already socially marginal discourses of the body, which, nonetheless, will remain a subject of central importance to humans as long as they retain embodied, theorizing minds (Bérubé, viii–x)^v.

To return to Davis' earlier point, the degree of permeability of the supposedly fixed category of the 'disabled' is often not considered as it fluctuates constantly to include or discard those individuals on the edge of the status quo that maintains the norm. For the vast majority of the dominant culture, even those that might consider themselves to be leftist thinkers, only a minute section of the population constitute the class of the 'disabled'—this selection presumed to be rendered evenly along racial, gender and class lines. This is, as I reiterate on Davis' account, an ideologically inscribed notion that excludes the reality that one in ten people—in 1995—were calculated as disabled in the USA. In A later publication he cites the percentage of disabled people to have risen to 16% (*BOB*, 148). This does not include the people who acquire disabilities related to ageing, who are considered part of the normal population (we all age but we don't all acquire the mark of disability!) and omitted from wearing the disability label (*EN*, 6). Of further note is that, for the most part, famous figures of history with physical disabilities—particularly authors, artists and politicians, are depicted with this aspect of themselves elided from autobiographical accounts, unless, as in the case of Milton or Beethoven, their disability is written into their creativity. Again, Davis points to the ableist mechanism at work which presumes a canonical work is connected to notions of normalcy (*EN*, 6–7). This problem is largely produced by a society that effectively excises those with more pronounced disabilities from the majority that is deemed 'able', thereby disconnecting them from the continuum of physical difference of which all are a part (*EN*, 6–7). When one considers statistics, it might be surprising to realize that impairment is a relatively common phenomenon. Albeit these figures are a bit dated, it may only serve to strengthen the argument if one presumes that the number of people with disabilities can only have increased given the rising health problems in the West in the last decade (*ibid*). Not only are one in ten people severely impaired worldwide, the onset of disease-generated disabilities such as AIDS, cancer and arthritis mean that impairments are sustained that arguably place a person once deemed 'able' into the 'disabled' category. Whilst those in the 'normal' category tend to conceive of disability as an absolute, marked by the deaf, blind, orthopaedically and mentally debilitated—even if one resorts to definition on a scale of normalcy—it becomes apparent that many more largely invisible impairments fall into the barracks of disability. The US Rehabilitation Act of 1973 describes anyone that has a limitation or interference with daily life activities such as moving, speaking, hearing, breathing and learning as having a disability. Whether the disability is permanent or temporary, acquired at birth or later in life, disease, accident, poverty or age-related, mental or physical or emotional, as Davis shows, when one considers how many people fall within this segment of society, it emerges that it is useful to consider disability as a descriptor as opposed to an absolute term—thereby opening it up to political problematization (Davis, *EN*, 7–9).

The reason disability is perceived as a totalizing category is difficult to uncover but Davis is in agreement with Gliedman and Roth that to wear the 'disabled' label carries such a strong association with social dysfunction that no other descriptor is necessary to implicitly condemn one's capacity and aptitude (Gliedman and Roth; Davis, *EN*, 9). The erasure of the impairments of distinguished people with disabilities indicates that success is not equivalent to impediment, though this point should be distinguished, Davis argues, from the fact that positions of public office were not considered compromised by instances of disability in the preindustrial

world—albeit reference to difference is also largely absent here (*EN*, 9). The sheer lack of a history of disability in this sense appears to indicate that its current demonization is a modern phenomenon. The stereotyping inherent to the label ‘disabled’ lends it an exclusivity that operates as a primary defining trait—necessarily negatively marked relative to its ‘normal opposite’. Of significance is the point raised by Laichowitz, which Davis reiterates—that a large conceptual gap exists between ‘impairment’ and ‘disability’. The latter is far more politicized and is a product of the ableist establishment—an imposition of constraints and handicaps by those whose abilities are not shared—the lack deemed unfavourable (*EN*, 10).

One of the major social mechanisms Davis discusses regarding discrimination is that of the process of visualizing the ‘disabled’ body. He refers to two primary modalities through which disability presents itself, namely function and appearance. Disability is perceived as the inability to do something that is considered ‘normal’ within the functional modality—whose standards of movement and effectiveness have been quantitatively established. For example, someone who needs glasses to correct their vision is not usually considered disabled but someone else deemed legally blind is never usually free of that label due to the manner in which the functioning of their body has been quantified (*EN*, 11). Davis draws a parallel between these methods of calibrating the body and those employed in factory work situations, thereby relating this functional operation to class issues and associated notions of practicality (*EN*, 12).

The second modality Davis introduces is that of appearance. When the person with disabilities is visually ‘identified’, they obtain the marking, the stigma (Goffman in Davis, 12) associated with compromised ability in a moment of spectacle, emphasizing the power of the gaze that is accompanied, largely by a powerful emotional response (*EN*, 12). Davis emphasizes the violence of this response. He explains that, much like the way Freud recognized a negative attraction lingering in a response of disgust and repulsion, the common ‘normalized’ response is to objectify the disabled person as a site initiating what I would term an abject response. Rather, he contends that the disabled object is in fact produced by this response—what he refers to as the Medusa-like gaze that paradoxically disables the observer through their reaction. Particularly, it is the social context that becomes disabled, identified through “familiar signs of discomfort and stickiness...guarded references, the common everyday words suddenly made taboo, the fixed stare elsewhere, the artificial levity, the compulsory loquaciousness, the awkward solemnity” (Goffman in Davis, *EN*, 12–13). Davis names this repulsion as the internalized manifestation of the desire to annihilate the object and, importantly, states that it is carried out on a societal level through actions that include institutionalization, segregation, discrimination and marginalization (*EN*, 13). Steve Roome, a man born with no arms, spends each day of his life negotiating this process of exclusion and recognizes the necessarily demeaning qualities it induces in the subject: “Most of us get put into some sort of box or other but the sort of box I was being put into — the type of label they were putting on me — meant I was being marginalised. And when that happens you’re devalued, and then you’re isolated” (Roome in Busch, 19). What supposedly constitutes a ‘normal’ response is, in actual fact socially constituted and politically motivated. He gives as illustration the fact that family of those deemed abnormal are acutely aware of this treatment of their relations—whom they have not learnt to marginalize or cast out (*EN*, 13). Of import here is to emphasize Davis’ reiteration that the body is not primarily a physical object, but rather a means of organizing the senses and the multiple modes of physical existence as they manifest within a larger socio-political network—a “distortion of conventional classification and knowing” (Murphy in Davis, 14). Another questionable assumption indicative of a normalized society of largely ‘normal’ inhabitants is that they

are thought to exist in a status of non-damage relative to the damaged ‘disabled’ ones. Such a simplistic binarist conception is simply naïve. Theodore Adorno lamented the damaging nature of society that exerts the “profoundest mutilation” before one’s achievements can be met (Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 58). Davis is adamant that the practice of theorizing disability must be embarked upon with an awareness of its constructedness—breaking through any predispositions towards presuming naïve givens built upon Enlightenment ideals postulating ideologies of wholeness and totality, thereby problematizing simplistic subject-object relations that seek to reduce the workings of the economies of power (*EN*, 15).

In contemporary times, in what is still commonly referred to as postmodernity, it is (arguably) taken for granted within wider society that a broad-ranging and inclusive judiciary is in place to offer support, safety and assistance to all of the populace, including those on the margins that once were excluded from representation due to their rejection from the society of normates I am discussing. It is not too uncommon in the contemporary West, in fact, to witness the exhibition of the now familiar conservative backlash, charging that society in all of its political correct inclusivity has gone too far in handing rights to the marginal and minoritized—avoiding the issue that a supposedly equal society would not require a hierarchical bequeathing of rights if it were truly egalitarian. Davis points out, however, that the rights of people with disabilities are still found sadly wanting on an ideological as well as judicial level—overwhelmed to the point of invisibility by other still marginal modalities, particularly that of race. He asks the valid question: whether society remains so ableist that disability is ignored as a serious category—and what some would term class— of oppression (*BOB*, 147). To cite statistics is partially problematic given the nature of their instability and constructedness; however, I am sure few would argue against the fact that whatever numbers are used to cite disability issues, one can guarantee that they are underrepresented since our schools, our textbooks, our media:

...utterly ignore the history of disability; the dominant culture renders invisible the works of disabled and deaf poets, writers, and performance artists...motion pictures still largely romanticize or pathologise disability; there is not much else to make the experience of 16 percent of the population come alive realistically and politically.

(Davis, *BOB*, 148)

People with disabilities suffer a disproportionate level of abuse. Disabled women are raped and abused at twice the rate of non-disabled women according to the centre for Women’s Policy studies (cited in Davis, *BOB*, 147) and the risk of physical assault, robbery and rape as is four times as high for disabled adults as it is for the general population according to researcher Dick Sobsey. Homes, both public and private leave people with disabilities vulnerable to attack and they regularly encounter physical, verbal and emotional abuse on the streets and other public areas (*ibid*). Legislation, likewise, is lacking to deter discrimination, violence and hatred towards people who are differently abled. For example, in the United States, federal efforts to prevent hate crimes are restricted to race, colour, religion and national origin albeit The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 defines a hate crime as one “in which the defendant intentionally selects a

victim...because of the actual or perceived race, colour, religion, national origin, ethnicity, gender, disability or sexual orientation of any person” (cited in Davis, *BOB*, 152).

Nor do people with disabilities figure well on a class scale. Over seventy percent of Americans with disabilities are unemployed; the poverty rate is three times higher for those adults that identify with having impairments and an estimated one third of all disabled children in the West live in poverty (*BOB*, 148). Despite the fact that these figures are so prominent, Davis’ argument draws attention to the fact that the issue of disability is largely elided when statistics are taken. Accidents, assaults and injuries are recorded and trials are reported but the fact that the people involved in these issues have disabilities is ignored in favour of other markers of liminality—primarily those of race and gender—and that those who do not fit clearly into a recognized minority status are marginalized. Davis explains that legal theorists employ the term ‘intersectionality’ for instances when a marginal category— particularly race—eclipses another, such as disability, when people who are deemed to fall within a recognized minority status fall outside of the parameters of what Anita Silvers refers to as constituting the paradigmatic members of the protected class (*BOB*, 148–149). So, for example, if a violent assault was to be enacted upon a disabled woman of colour, it would likely be filed as a racial hate crime, with perhaps a mention of discrimination on the grounds of sex and possibly gender—with the likelihood of recording the crime based on disability close to non-existent. With intersectionality largely a given factor regarding judiciary decision-making—casting individuals who fall into the intersection between two categories of oppression into the margins of the stronger class—an insidious truth prevails. Whilst Legislation remains disengaged from disability, those that victimize can only gain from it, as criminals preying upon minimized identity stake their claim on this legacy of disbelief, disappearance and invisibility (*BOB*, 154–155).

Davis rightly contends that disability remains, for the most part, dismissed in all sectors of society—remaining the last significantly unresolved area of discrimination, at least on judicial, cultural, ethical and academic levels in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (*BOB*, 150). Whilst some ideological ableists maintain the illusion that people with disabilities are somehow immune to damage through paternalistic state caretaking (Hahn in Davis, 155), the prejudice against this sector of society is subdued and explained away as benign neglect. Hate takes many forms and the constant informing the violence towards people with disabilities is, and I am concurring with a number of leading disability theorists, a hatred of difference in a society still governed by an ideology of perfected embodiment (*BOB*, 156)—built on a binary construct that is not only illusory but patently false.

In an important and recent paper, Davis grapples with the enormous problem of challenging identity politics as the primary module for articulating disability politics. His contention is that enormous shifts in the use of this model are underway in the work of the intellectual left regarding other groups of marginal status and to ignore these shifts would only further impede the development of an already lagging social politic for people whom this area of study affects. That is not to ignore the degree of importance that issues of identity have impacted upon and their continued affectivity, particularly considering the relative youth of the disability movement as a whole (*BOB*, 10). He explains that the current form of Disability as a category initiated as late as the 1970s and still occupies a first or second-wave status. Indeed, the first wave of any social structure necessitates the establishment of identity against previous social and political definitions arising from an oppressive politics. This process requires an overturning of terms marked through negative differentiation

and is often hypostasized simultaneous to parallel processes such as the reappropriation of derogatory discourse, exemplified in such phrases as “Deaf Power”. This phase is often characterized by solidarity against a commonly perceived oppressor and an agreement on basic rights against discrimination for the entire represented group (ibid). The struggle of the earliest proponents of the first wave of the 1970s gave rise to a second wave in the 1990s that were already familiar with the liberatory models and thus began to redefine their rights. Blanket solidarity was no longer sought since the issue of identity had already been established and so a greater focus on diversity emerged. This is often seen within marginal social struggle as essentialist notions are challenged resulting in schisms behind a formerly unified front (*BOB*, 10–11). Both waves, however, have maintained a strong interest in preserving a clear notion of their identity as “people with disabilities” (PWD) in order to create a collective unity which previously was non-existent beyond medical definitions of various impairments. Indeed, medical diagnoses often served to sever links between individuals with common socio-political goals oppressed under the same system of differentiation, particular in western countries embracing the ethic of individuality and normalization. In the United States, the return of the newly impaired veterans of the Vietnam War initiated a civil rights movement of disability activism which culminated in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. This approach, based on the African American civil rights struggle, compared the white majority with the oppressive ableist contingent, and was seen as preferable to the earlier medical and charity models. The social model, also referred to as the British model, saw disability largely as a socially constructed category, and made a distinction between impairment and disability—the former considered a physical fact whilst the latter refers specifically to the social process that converts an impairment into a negative instance of discrimination (*BOB*, 11–12).

The advent of postmodernism, with its insistence on the destabilization of unities and transcendentalism, was to exert a profound impact on Disability—in a similar manner to the disruptive waves that shook the stubborn stability of much of the humanities and social sciences. One area, Davis contends, remained unchallenged despite deconstructive efforts—identity. In fact it appeared to gain in strength as disability activists fought for its inclusion as a necessary ingredient of the multicultural stew. The stronghold that maintained its presence lay in the tacit implication that to challenge identity amounts to prejudice in the form of discriminatory exclusion within a collective of emerging marginal identities (*BOB*, 12–13). Again, just as it was eroded within other fields of identity politics, the simplistic claims of the essentialists—that one’s identity is intrinsically located within and upon the body—began to take its toll on the stronghold of identity as a core, unquestionable feature of one’s being. Social constructionism still maintained an answer to this (13) but can be accused for begging its own question as well as dismantling any sense of identity at all—again these two sides of the identity coin hover at the extremes of likelihood and are all too easily invoked as fallacious opposites whose value erodes as their voracity increases. Disability, Davis argues, provides the opportunity to rethink and perhaps rectify many of these upheavals in the identity crisis, significantly through linking together previously disparate identities, thereby replacing the circularity of postmodern thought with what he terms dismodernism (13–14).

As I have already elaborated, Davis contends that the other identity discourses, such as those of race and gender, arose during the mid-nineteenth century as a resistance to scientific discourses founded on eugenicist theories. In fact, one could argue that the practice of eugenics was instrumental in carving the delineations

between the various categories of identity politics through the manner in which they grouped defectives according to their marks of abnormality. Postmodernity, both in the sciences and arts, has formed an essential role in problematizing these categories (*BOB*, 14). For example, scientific advancements in the areas of DNA analysis, stem cell research and *in vitro* sterilization all point to the fact that categorization based on racial distinction cannot be ascertained in physiological terms. The case is the same for previously cemented ideas typecasting ethnicity. Likewise, fixities are being dismantled through the advancement of understandings in gender politics and sexual orientation, undermining binaries that would previously clearly separate male and female, heterosexual and homosexual as physical, immovable markers of self (*BOB*, 14–18).

Davis warns against the temptation to cling to the strands of essentialist and constructionist arguments in the face of the gaping maw of identity cleft wide in the unstable jaws of postmodernity—they are, simply, rationally indefensible (19) and inherently circular and clearly incapable of improving with time. Likewise, a return to a neo-classical model—whereby the completeness of identity is rearticulated once more as an achievable goal—would not only halt intellectual progress but initiate the tendency advocated through the eugenicist movement, to correct the perceived ‘defects’ with new technologies such as those touted by the new geneticists of the Human Genome Project (*BOB*, 19–20). The political impact of a new wave of eugenics is disturbing enough by implication alone; one can only begin to imagine the cultural and political devastation wreaked through the consequences of such practices as pre-natal screening for selective birthing and related engineering to remove apparent genetic ‘mistakes’ and ‘defects’. As Davis rightly makes clear, these arguments are generally regarded with great suspicion amongst people with disabilities, who claim that they may well have been denied the right to existence had this been the scientific context deciding their entrance into the world (*BOB*, 22).

Davis is searching for a new approach that transgresses the limits of current and dated approaches to disability and the struggle for a useful articulation of agency and identity. He proposes a new ethics of the body that capitalizes on the inherent instability of disability as a category—whose volatility I have already introduced into this discussion. This element, inherent to the nature of disability itself, Davis argues is sufficient for it to move beyond many of the problems of identity politics. Impairment—the oppressed bodily status that is scientifically authenticated and socially cemented as instance of disability, remains as ambiguous as the boundaries separating the ‘able’ and the ‘disabled’, the sick and the ‘cured’ (*BOB*, 23–25). Davis’ dismodernism articulates disability as a neoidentity through emphasizing the incoherence of this category and suggests that its ambivalent nature will augment and rewrite notions of other categories in the throes of identity crisis (26). This notion works directly against the exclusivity inhering in the multiple identity group model that formed as a reactionary revolt against the previous binarist thinking that postulated clear difference and exclusivity—the Enlightenment model that irrationally created an ideology of a species of equal individuals. Whereas the latter were constructed as whole, Davis argues that the postmodern subject though “pierced and narrative-resistant...was still whole, independent, unified, self-making, and capable” (Davis, *BOB*, 26). I would have to argue that this statement is problematic given the dystopian, fractured, disenfranchised subject of neo-imperialism, neo-colonialism and failed democracy. Perhaps a compromise can be found in the notion that in theory, the subject of a distinct identity group maintains their unity and capability, augmented, as it were, by the power of their group identity. In practice, however, the seamlessness of these categories simply exists as a

façade to obscure the inherent instability of socially constructed identity categories. This does not impede his argument for a new dismodernism, however, which seeks out a “new kind of universalism and cosmopolitanism that is reacting to the localization of identity” without a return to the fallacious transcendence of Enlightenment (27) or the multicultural exclusivity birthed of postmodernity.

Davis cites Zygmund Bauman’s reference to “the privatization of the body...as the primal scene of postmodern ambivalence” (Zygmund in Davis, 27) when locating the current areas of concern a dismodernist approach to disability should address. He critiques the consumerist obsession with what he terms “care *of* the body”—the abundance of products used as well as cosmetic and technological implants and regulators designed and utilized primarily to ‘normalize’ the body^{vi}. He also refers to the problematic of “caring *for* the body”—the practices of maintaining the economy of the body pursued by the healthcare and dependent care industries that are largely controlled and dominated by people who are not identified as having disabilities. A dismodernist approach, Davis argues, cares *about* the body and begins with a new attention being turned to human and civil rights, in order to consider the enormous impact class and its privilege or lack thereof, bestows on people with disabilities—many of which are unemployed, uneducated, in prison or, in the case of developing countries, in dire poverty (*BOB*, 27-29). The oppressive subjection that eventuates from caring of and for the body is subsumed through an ethics of caring about the body. Postmodern identity politics and its multicultural exclusivity fails to recognize the larger system of regulation that enforces a systemization of identity groups based on perceived or actual physical characteristics and so, argues Davis, ironically, the most marginalized ‘group’ is able to stand back and demonstrate the continuity of this perpetuating system of oppression (29).

Moving beyond the singularity of the humanist model—which Davis argues still inheres in postmodernity—the dismodern subject remains incomplete and always partially dependent and interdependent. Society acknowledges a new protectionism that completes the subject through legal, judicial, technological and economic intervention with an emphasis on functionality—to create a new class where everyone is in fact disabled without these forms of assistance and intervention. The hegemony of normalcy perpetuated in the postmodern subject is hence overwritten as the universality of the body’s limitations is acknowledged.

Davis’ dismodernist vision certainly contains the potential to finding a way out of the binds of continued oppression that contain, marginalize and ultimately continue to exclude the body defined as disabled—and hence, seemingly inherently lesser. However, his vision still remains largely theoretical and whilst one can argue that a growing awareness of the negative and constraining attitudes towards disability are starting to show some measure of social reevaluation—for the most part, the status quo continues to represent a society who, if it were to fully appreciate the depth of the spectacle it continues to create around the disabled body, might drown in the outpouring of shame, whose legacy of unspeakable secrets can surely never be quantified.

CHAPTER 2. Notes

ⁱ A term used by people with disabilities to draw attention to constructions concerning normalcy.

ⁱⁱ The relevance of this will emerge as I begin to form links during the thesis between the manner in which the criminal body and the disabled body have been constructed as extreme deviants from the norm, particularly with regards to visual representation.

ⁱⁱⁱ See <http://www.indymedia.org.nz/article/77609/uoa-liggins-institute-extinction-eugenic> for a short article on Indymedia regarding current leftist views and resistance to eugenics arguments in New Zealand.

^{iv} This is not in any way to imply that these other deviant categories are in any way warranted their status, but more to emphasize the mass grouping of anyone labelled as deviant/unfit.

^v It is Bérubé's contention, in fact, that the relevance of disability as a category of social thought will continue to depend, as it has done, on the practices and politics of people with disabilities rather than the work of academic disability endeavours.

^{vi} I feel that here he should distinguish between implants and technologies designed purely for cosmetic enhancement and those required to facilitate one's physical functioning as the ideologies informing the use of these two categories differ vastly in their capacity for necessity in a consumerist society. Prosthetics designed for physical assistance would possibly be better suited to his next category of discussion that references the healthcare industry.

CHAPTER 3

The Spectacle of the Speciesist Hierarchical Divide

"Am not I "A fly like thee? "Or art not tho" A man like me? (William Blake, *The Fly* 1789)

It is through the vanitie of the same imagination that he dare equall himself to God, that he ascribeth divine conditions unto himself, that he selecteth and separateth himselfe from out the ranke of other creatures. (Michel de Montaigne, *An Apologie of Raymond Sebond*, 1575)

Many readers may wonder why this chapter is featuring in this thesis at all. That sort of reaction only emphasizes the need for its inclusion, since the reality of its secrets must not go unheard in a thesis that explores the representation of the marginalized body. This is a secret whose obscurity prevails in the very outer margins of the cultural collective, governed by such powerful and sweeping discourses representing ideologies of prejudice and cruelty so vast that, for many, have evanesced to the point of disappearance. The spectacle of cruelty to non-human sentient creatures knows particular obscurity due to the glaring lack of accountability inhering in their treatment. A large proportion of the human treatment of animals fails to concede blame since the practices informing this relationship often are not even exposed as relevant to the realm of abuse and neglect. When a subject has known no rights, how can they then be removed? Even in spite of this argument, that is, when some form of acknowledgement is given to the right for non-human animals to receive protection from unmediated brutality, the defence is largely tediously forthcoming and the human oppressor inevitably fails to be held properly accountable for innumerable unspeakable cruelties. Awareness of the need for animal protection is slowly seeping into the broader cultural consciousness. Oppressive paradigms such as those exemplified during medieval times and into the Enlightenment era are gradually being overwritten by an ethos of care and acknowledgement of the validity of their agency and a consciousness that finds worth on its own terms, rather than those representative solely of human values.

An almost immeasurable challenge lies in locating a more grizzly collection of secrets that give rise to the spectacle and the shame evidenced in the abuse, neglect, torture, mistreatment and death of non-human animals by their human oppressors. This ongoing phenomenon—that occurs in every corner of the globe—indicates a shameful genocide of monstrous proportions. If one briefly examines the act of killing animals—the sheer extent of its largely secreted proportion and variability—the shame of the hidden spectacle emerges in shocking magnitude that is almost beyond comprehension. In the introduction to their book that focuses on animal death in culture, the Animal Studies Group reveal that almost all known areas of human life are directly reliant on the killing of animals (The Animal Studies Group (ASG), *Killing Animals*, 3). The multiple contexts are as varied as the innumerability of the types of killing—ranging from scientific research and industry, to food production, the clothing and cosmetics industries, recreational and sports industries, the pet industry, to the production of goods and materials for human use and benefit—and beyond (ibid). When one takes into account other massively damaging factors of human impact on the environment—such as the destruction of natural habitats through industrial development and its resultant pollution, the pervasiveness of the death of animals through the hands of humans is evidenced. This holocaust is emphasized by the sheer number of terms used to couch the act of killing animals: “They are also killed, gassed, electrocuted, exterminated, hunted, butchered, vivisected, shot, trapped, snared, run over, lethally injected, culled, sacrificed, slaughtered, executed, euthanized, destroyed, put down, put to sleep, and even, perhaps, murdered” (ibid).

The invisibility of the scale of animal death predominates in the urban public domain—maintaining its obscurity from the public eye behind the walls of slaughterhouses, factories, kill shelters and medical laboratories. This remains true, largely, for the animal deaths resulting from environmental damage—unless it enters the public eye through an unavoidably noticeable disaster—the latter often ironically accompanied by a shocked outcry at the horrific torments endured by the hapless beasts (ibid). This, in fact, only serves to reinforce taboos on certain kinds of animal death, thereby ensuring the continued practice and accompanying

invisibility of more regulated animal death—which appears to continue unnoticed despite the facts of its reality remaining largely publicly accessible.

Killing animals remains a structural fixture of human-animal relations—representing human power that is both extreme and customary. It forms a continuum throughout history, its articulation altering as ‘progress’ and technology changes in scope and mode. The scale of killing in contemporary times, however, is without precedent and is reflected through the sheer number of animals that are brought into existence for the sole purpose of killing them for human purpose. Despite the apparently pervasive existence of humanitarian sensibilities and the seeming political centrality of institutions serving the welfare of animals, public concern barely affects the scale of animal killing. In some cases, humane institutions such as kill shelters only perpetuate the numbers of animal deaths (ASG, 4). Whilst existing to prevent suffering, they operate to end it through extermination, whilst simultaneously offering the public a conscience-free avenue for ridding themselves of the animals for which they have taken responsibility. As animal studies scholars point out, the killing of animals can rarely, if ever, be seen outside of accounting for human attitudes, perceptions, ideas and assumptions since people are heavily invested in the killing of animals. This occurs at the level of highly technical industrial processes and complex scientific endeavour, to the control of the animal body through cultural processes that ritualize and codify—such as hunting, butchery and sacrifice (ibid). The codes and concomitant attitudes vary enormously even within one seemingly homogenous cultural zone but one fact remains clear—that the killing and control of animals can never exist outside of the human lens.

Animals, of course, do not only exist within the social context of killing. Our world is inextricably entwined with the animal world—their presence is pervasive, continuous and multiplicitous. From the “park” to the “wild”, from farm to zoo to city street, they turn their gaze back on us—from pharmacy to restaurant to clothier their bodies saturate, envelop and mingle with ours” (Shapiro, Kenneth, 1). Animals fill our minds and hearts with their symbolism, accessed through oral, written and visual texts, through fables and rhymes, advertisements and the rhetoric of “experts”.

By the early nineties some of the groundbreaking work by the first animal studies scholars had begun. Of popular argument was the proposition that all meaning emerges as a product of social interaction rather than existing as a quality inhering in the object or physical being of the subject. The Symbolic Interactionists incorporated animals into this argument—whom, they asserted, despite their physical being, once in contact with humans, acquire a cultural identity through the attempts of people to understand, use or communicate with them. Animals are ‘transformed’ according to the manner in which their meaning is socially constructed (Arluke and Sanders, ‘The Human Point of View’, 9). Here, the essentialist argument for the elusive quality of the ‘innate’ aspect of the animal is usurped by a search to isolate the manner in which humans conceptualize and construct the animal identity. Being becomes a product of culture rather than a biological fact.

Animal meanings can appear to maintain fixed values (Arluke and Sanders, 10)—to exist synchronically—though a tenacious acceptance of their apparently enduring existence as cultural phenomena. Dualisms such as that supported by the polarity of the ‘wild’ versus the ‘domestic’ is one example of this apparently largely fixed cultural more governed by two distinctly discernible categories (ibid). But, more recently, it has become more reasonable to take as a given that cultural meaning is inevitably subject to

diachronic change and that, logically, one ought to acknowledge the changes of social constructions over time (Arluke and Sanders, 14). If one has to consider the same dualism of ‘wild versus domestic, or “tame”, it emerges that there are many historical conceptualizations of “wildness” which might well be positioned in the more familiar “tame” category of the present. Arluke and Sanders describe the manner in which the human conceptualization of primates has changed dramatically from an alignment with the exotic and wild to the tamer model—one far closer to *Homo sapiens*. Anthropological models of evolution remodelled earlier images of primates with more humanoid features as they began replacing what were classed as human “primitives” with nonhuman primates as the biological ancestor of the modern human being. Accompanied by observational studies of primates disseminating information through nature documentaries and magazines like *National Geographic*, the rift between species was narrowed considerably. Moreover, there was an increasing anthropomorphization of primates through field studies researchers, such as Jane Goodall who described the personalities and language of apes in largely human terms. All of these factors contributed to what Sperling refers to as the “obliteration” of the border between humans and animals (ibid)—though I would argue that the blurring of the boundary between the categories would be a more realistic way to phrase such developments.

Arluke and Sanders cite two excellent examples of the blurring of this once strictly delineated border¹. The first describes a project involving the research and conservation of wild orang-utans in Borneo, which allowed for the assistance of laypeople. Although these infants were confiscated from the pet trade and their rehabilitation required little to no physical contact with humans, many of the volunteers expressed intense desires to hold them and nurture them as one would a human infant. The volunteers were tourists and when the programme permitted some contact towards the end of its running, they effusively related the profundity of their experience, with certain tourists competing for the affection of the infants as they sought to “babysit” them. The primate infants were related to in the manner that was most comfortable for the tourists—they were anthropomorphized as “quasi-family members of human society” (Arluke and Sanders, 15).

The next example is that of animals in the zoo environment—of which much valuable work has been done since the first texts critiquing this social practice. Animals are taken from their “natural” habitats and placed within a “human frame while their natural habitat is transformed into our dream of a human-animal paradise” (Sax in Arluke and Sanders, 16). The animals’ lives are leisurely, devoid of the need to hunt and fight as they eat unrecognizable prey in the form of pre-butchered meat and live in habitats devoid of territorial dispute. The entire environment is based on human conception—where habitats once spanning entire continents become exhibits that are shrunk, cut, pasted and repositioned into a few small acres. These environments effectively dissolve the dichotomy of ‘tame’ versus ‘wild’ animals and their concomitant environs. This is particularly true in more modern zoological practice where the traditional caged enclosures typified by steel bars and cement floors are being replaced with environments modelled on more ‘natural’ habitats. Animals are monitored and controlled through concealed cameras and radio controlled collars and can thereby be approached within close proximity to the spectator—a normally near impossible feat in the ‘wild’. Whilst some animals ignore or become habituated to visitors, many respond to and interact with people, though the content of this spectacle is a highly culturally constructed version of how these animals would normally behave in an untouched and uninterrupted environment (ibid). Ironically, these practices, that exist to appease and feed a human ideal of an animal and are therefore highly unnatural constructions of the way that animals would otherwise exist, serve to break down the dichotomy between animals and their human counterparts—as long as

one continues to suspend knowledge or consciousness of the fact that it is through an anthropocentric lens that these changes occur.

There are other methods employed by people involving the control and representation of non-human animals that engage further dichotomies in a problematic manner. One such practice is that of taxidermy: the stuffed wild animal that is painstakingly created to appear 'lifelike'. Not only is the knowledge of the animal prior to death presupposed, but the 'lifelike' relic can be closely handled and examined without fear (Arluke and Sanders, 17). Again, the animal's life is controlled to the point that it ceases altogether—and its representation in death continues wholly on human terms. This blatant trophy of man's domination over 'nature' is even more patently exemplified in the hunter's trophy—the animal head decorating the wall or pelt draped on the floor to be trodden underfoot—the animal foe quashed through the 'might' of man.

A far cry from the indigenous person who wraps himself in the discarded fur and wool of his prey to stave off freezing conditions, the denizens of haute couture who flaunt their fur throws replete with head and paws along the international catwalks and boulevards of Fashion and Fame, project the erotically exotic—in their representative domination over the animal kingdom.

World-wide, pet owners and breeders remain complicit in the blurring of the boundaries between human and animal, 'wild' and 'tame' as they continue to genetically construct their conceptions of the perfect animal form. The animal breeding industry is so far removed from any sense of the 'innate' that any calls to biological essentialism flail, completely unfounded and ludicrously unsubstantiated as the living cells of animals are modelled according to the current fashion in an ongoing process of socially sanctioned genetic construction.

More recently, animal studies scholars de-emphasize social constructionism in favour of outlining a more intricate and refined approach that examines the cultural, philosophical, economic and social means by which humans and animals interact (Armstrong and Simmons, *Knowing Animals*, 1). Here, the human tends to be viewed as constituting one type of animal amongst the other species, avoiding an exclusive point of view in favour of allowing for a cultural analysis that examines the similarities and differences between animals and the manner in which they are read in a far more thorough cultural analysis (Armstrong and Simmons, 1–2). This break with fixity represents the collapse of two formerly powerful hegemonic forces: the life sciences and its sole stronghold over the animal world through the ideology of positivism; and the entirely separate focus of humanism that isolated studies of culture, history, philosophy and society to human endeavour. Interestingly, although over approximately the last thirteen years numerous challenges to this dualistic cultural model have emerged, it was Michel Foucault who anticipated the rupture in the seeming seamless categorization of Enlightenment knowledge when he introduced *The Order of Things* with Jorge Luis Borges's pastiche of a Chinese encyclopedia which accordingly divides animals into:

(a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) *et cetera*, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies

(Borges, cited in Foucault in Armstrong and Simmons, 2)

The Modern period of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries exemplified positivistic thought and the practice of anthropomorphism—finding human qualities in non-human beings—later thought to represent epistemological fault, and a mistaken knowledge of animals. Mentalistic, proximate knowledge was rejected and understanding was replaced with ‘functional’ knowledge gained from ‘scientific knowledge gained in laboratories. Animals lost their agency and became the passive materialization of evolution whose driving force was exemplified through the process of survival (Armstrong and Simmons, 3).

It is useful for my purposes—so as to expose the extent of the exploitation of animal Spectacle—to discuss a medieval reading of animal representation, since, in certain areas of Europe especially, animals were not only regarded as capable of agency but moreover, able to deliberately plot and execute crimes against humanity—of which they were duly prosecuted and punished for their misdeeds (Beirnes, Piers. ‘The Law is an Ass...’, 27).

Animal trials have existed for several centuries but at no stage in history with such prolific regularity as in Medieval Europe. Piers Beirnes details some of the most relevant social and cultural aspects of this phenomenon, derived from the original document, *The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals* written by E.P Evans in 1906. From the Middle Ages until the eighteenth century, some European peoples were of the anthropomorphic belief that animals could plot and commit crime. Those ‘officially’ suspected of wrongdoing were prosecuted in dedicated secular courts and, if found guilty, were subject to a variety of punishments—even the extreme spectacle of public execution (Beirnes, 28). Beirnes argues for the likelihood that this belief in animal criminality originates in Judeo-Christian dictates that were firmly entrenched in both legal practice and popular culture. Secular and ecclesiastical authorities were prone to literally interpret the Hebrew enjoinder in *Exodus* that goring oxen should be stoned to death. Furthermore, *Genesis* holds animals accountable for the shedding of human blood, the cursing of the serpent leading to Original Sin and various other curses including a connection with recalcitrant inanimate objects (Beirnes, 29). Ontologically, the overriding context of animal trials in Europe emerged from the belief that the cosmology of the universe was directed by a rigidly fixed hierarchical chain of being. At the peak of the hierarchy is placed the male God of Judeo-Christendom, heading His earthly interpreters and representatives—manifesting in the State and Church respectively. Beneath these figures existed the multi-layered feudal system of strata—the entire solely human hierarchy—which in turn topped the non-human animal kingdom and their ladder of superiority—ranging from the primates through the quadrupeds, the lower animals, the vermin and insects who preceded

vegetable and plant life. This entire system demands as a central prerequisite that humans alone—fashioned in the image of God—possess free will and the propensity of forgiveness for their sins and hence the possibility to find peace with God in the hereafter.

As the medieval period moved into its later stages, attempts were made to more accurately determine the moral and legal responsibility of animals for their actions though there is no concrete evidence of a general belief that the volition and contrivance of animals matched or even compared with human purpose. Sir Thomas Aquinas was the first medieval theologian to examine the grounds on which animals might be prosecuted and punished for their misdeeds. He reasoned that since they are God's creatures, employed for His purposes, it would be blasphemy to curse them—and a malediction would in fact be unlawful in the eyes of God. He did argue, however, that justification for trying and punishing animals existed for the guilty ones, the agents of Satan—who would in fact be the one receiving the ultimate punishment, albeit it was the animals acting as the agents of sin who lost their lives. Jurists, following the principle of the goring ox I mentioned above, held that the absence of legal intent did not remove liability from animals for causing wrongful death. A goring ox, therefore, is not morally guilty but, as a lower animal killing or harming a higher animal in the hierarchy, it threatened to overturn the divinely ordained Chain of Being. American author E. P Evans was the first writer to convincingly document the medieval belief—both secular and religious—in the criminal liability of animals in *The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals* (Beirnes, 29–30). Evans drew his information largely from the records of Bartholomé Chassenée, a French jurist whose record of animal trials was published in 1531 and popularized by Evans in the late nineteenth century. Chassenée made his own reputation at the French bar acting as defence counsel for a number of rats which were prosecuted in the ecclesiastical court for the felony of eating and “wantonly” destroying local barley—the eloquence with which he delivered his plea established his fame as a criminal lawyer. The sentencing of animals rigidly adhered to contemporary legal precedent and procedures—some of which included a reprimanding smack on the head, a cursed anathema, excommunication and capital punishment. For example, a rather notorious case of *lex talionis* (the law of retaliation) existed in the French city of Falaise in 1386 regarding the sentencing and punishment of an infanticidal sow. After being found guilty in a court of law presided over by judge and counsel, the sow was dressed in human clothes, mutilated in the head and leg region and executed in the public square by an official hangman. On occasion animals were granted pardons or clemency based on various factors, such as youth. For example, a sow and her six piglets were put on trial for having murdered and partly devoured a child. Although the sow was sentenced to death, her piglets were acquitted on account of their youth and the fact their mother led them astray (31).

In various parts of Europe between the ninth and nineteenth centuries the prosecution of animals encompassed a broad scope of major and minor crimes committed by domestic as well as wild animals. Evans details crimes evidenced on the original Notices of Indictment, such as homicide being committed by animals ranging from bees to snakes; fraud by field-mice (dressed as heretical clerks!) and theft by foxes. Judicial proceedings were implemented against animals as seemingly unlikely as weevils, gadflies, locusts, dolphins and turtledoves (31–32).

Beirnes draws our attention to the issue of periodicity regarding the animal trials—which, from Evans’ information it can be ascertained were concentrated in the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries. All of the earliest cases involved wild animals and until the 13th century all cases referred to by Evans involved animals that were classed as “vermin”, like flies and locusts. The first trial ever recorded by Evans was in 824, though liturgical literature documents earlier cases—such as the burning of storks at Avignon in 666. The latest trial cited by Evans involved the trial of a dog in Switzerland in 1906, though this was by no means the last trial of an animal that occurred. Interestingly and for no obvious reason, pigs far outnumbered any other species of animals subject to prosecution (32).

The geographic location of animal prosecutions, according to the information evidenced through Evans, appears to be concentrated in the south of France and Italy, Germany and Switzerland. However, this does not remove their existence in other areas, since the documentation of said trials may have been more prolific in those areas—and there have been animal trials cited in Slavonic regions, other European countries, Canada, Turkey and Yugoslavia (Beirnes, 33). The European practice of taking legal proceedings against vermin was exported into the New World through the ecclesiastical courts—such as the case in Connecticut originally reported by Cotton Mather where an animal trial was seen to intersect with bestiality. Potter, a “pious wretch aged 60” was executed for “damnable Bestialities” with a cow, two heifers, three sheep and two sows, which were killed prior to his own publicly displayed demise (ibid).

There is little evidence from Evans that animal trials existed in England over this period, though Beirnes points out that from 1203 when it was first documented, the old Anglo-Saxon institution of *noxae deditio* was developed by the English Eyre courts stating that the owner of any instrument, whether animate or not, that accidentally caused death to a human, had to pay a sum to the sovereign. Animals were therefore classed as nothing more than the instruments of their owners and, if found to be the cause of death, were declared *deo dandum*—“needing to be given to God”—and their value translated to coin and given to the royal exchequer. English cosmology shared the same hierarchical cosmology espoused by the Europeans but differed, according to Beirnes, on this issue of *deodands*, which continued through to the middle of the nineteenth century. He does outline the variability of claims to animal trials in England, however, and shows that legal historians such as W.W. Hyde suggested a high probability that animal trials were common during the Elizabethan era—a point supported by Ives who cites a passage from the *Merchant of Venice* where Gratiano berates Shylock:

Thy currish spirit

Govern’d a wolf, who, hanged for human slaughter

Even from the gallows did its fell soul fleet

(Shakespeare, *MOV*, Act IV, sc 1. Cited in Beirnes, 34)

For the most part, Evans' account of medieval animal trials remains largely uncontentious and is said to implicitly accept many evolutionary ideological assumptions, which is continuous with his chief objective—to chronicle and popularize Chassenée's forgotten account written in the sixteenth century. Evans does, however, regularly take the liberty to comment on the methods and practices involving animals and jurisdiction during the medieval period, referring to such practices against "irrational creatures" as "childish" and apt to illustrate the "gross credulity to which the strongly conservative, precedent-mongering mind of the jurisconsult is apt to fall easy prey"—referring particularly to medieval theologians who set the precedent for such stupidity in jurisprudence (Beirnes, 35). Evans goes further, for not only does he ridicule the comical idiocy of such practices, but he ruefully admonishes medieval lawyers, clerics and their greater society for this horrifying human abuse of animals that escapes endless comicality due to the undeniable physical consequences for creatures undeserving of such abominable treatment (35). His tendency towards criticism is based on the lack of evolutionary development of legislators as primitives, an approach echoed by anthropologist Sir James Frazer in his *Folk-Lore in the Old Testament* penned in 1923, where he contended that the proceedings and solemnities typified through the rites of justice masked the true barbarism of these events. He attributed the infantile status of the "races" that performed these trials as the overriding reason for their existence, where the great mistake lay in the primitives ascribing attributes of human beings—such as rationality and the ability to exercise free will—to animals—a far less advanced form of life as was evidenced in the Chain of Being (Beirnes, 36). Interestingly, critics such as Graeme Newman argue against the likes of Evans, through dismissing the notion that medieval animal trials were cruel. Newman asserts that since animals were afforded the same treatment as humans, that is, were subjected to the same criminal justice process that a human was subjected to, their judicial supervision was better than it is in modern times. Where now, for example, a pig that attacks or eats a baby would be most likely instantly killed, in the medieval era it was often afforded a trial much as a human would be—his argument is that animals were treated no more cruelly than any human (Beirnes, 38–39). This seems a persuasive argument superficially, but it presumes that animals operate on human terms and is therefore essentially anthropocentric. Newman's argument for animals and humans sharing an egalitarian status hinges on an example he cites that animals were placed on the rack to extract confession, exactly mimicking the procedure applied to humans (ibid). Of course he neglects to take into account that they could not speak any human languages—and I find it distinctly doubtful that any suitable interpreters were on hand to assist in excising the guilty statement from the animal's cries.

Evans has been criticized rather stringently for failing to address the true complexity of the trials and in dealing with the impact of their significance. Finkelstein, for example, a specialist in the ancient Near East, has argued that animal trials were not even in existence outside of the occident and therefore are not representative actions of so-called primitive peoples. He contends that rather than a system of trial and punishment being in place, non-occidental societies attributed responsibility to the owner of the animal in question—much like the English *deodands*: "The notion that trials and punishments of irrational creatures and of inanimate things are a valid legal procedure occurs *uniquely* in Western society" (Finkelstein in Beirnes, 36–37).

There is a possibility that animal trials existed in the occident before the medieval period—which Evans and Frazer posit as the date of their origin. Hyde asserts that animal trials occurred in the ancient

world, where he argues that Aristotle and Plato describe relevant legal procedures in classical Athens. These texts suggest that a special court was convened in the Athenian Prytaneum to try unknown murderers, inanimate objects, such as stones and blocks of wood, and animals that caused human death. It was asserted that to leave a wrongful death unpunished would arouse the wrath of the Furies, which in turn would cause the soul of the deceased to wander endlessly (Beirnes, 37). Finkelstein challenges this assertion, replying that no actual records of such trials exist—and that the surviving accounts reveal that these representations were of a far more ceremonial or magical ilk than a legal one. In a later paper dated 1986, Cohen challenges Evans, Hyde and Finkelstein with a highly relevant and much needed retort—that the issue of the existence of animal trials in both pre-medieval Europe and outside of the occident relies largely on what can be taken to constitute an animal trial—a question that cannot be resolved in purely empirical terms. The thrust of her argument relies on a selection of anthropological analyses of law produced in the 1960's and 70's, which substantiate her claim that to deny the extra-occidental existence of animal trials is to “view the conflict and dispute resolution mechanisms of other, perhaps technologically less developed, societies through our own cultural and legal prisms” (Cohen, cited in Beirnes, 37). One shouldn't presume that it is necessary to take into consideration the institutional techniques and mechanisms of western law when reviewing the harm, perceived or actual, caused by animals in areas outside of the West—to do so would be to fallaciously assume that any judicial structure that does not mirror western standards is not an effective convention for the prosecution and punishment of animals deemed as offenders (Beirnes, 37–38).

As a whole, the exact reason for the seeming proliferation of animal trials in the medieval period is unclear, as is the cause of their decline. Apart from the biblical precepts allotted animal trials, numerous theories have been propounded for their justification—such as deterring other animals from finding a similar fate. A more plausible reason, as Beirnes suggests, would be to provide intimidation tactics against those responsible for the offending animals' actions—thereby serving as a means to convey a morality of responsible ownership (38).

Beirnes does not address the issue of animal cruelty in any great depth in his article and dismisses the definitive value of any of the accounts he discusses as unsatisfactory. He rightly acknowledges the complexity of variables one would need to consider in order to properly understand and contextualize the purpose and very existence of animal trials—socio-cultural factors such as temporality, nationality, gender, class and religion. Even if this were pursued, he contends that their proliferation in the medieval era would remain unaccounted for (39).

Newman re-enters the issue through his interest in cataloguing the institutional and doctrinal influence of religion on types of punishments exacted through the medieval period. He correctly asserts that animal trials constituted only one aspect of a larger matrix of social control contrived by religious authorities in order to dominate the dualism they upheld between society and nature—and all the presumptions that they are founded upon. The Holy Inquisition, therefore, considered animals as a form of life no less threatening potentially than women or Jews to the structural fort of their religious stronghold. Newman's stress on the importance of the link between animal trials and religion is important not only for the fact that the judicial process relied on a biblical passage from *Exodus* that instructed the death of an

animal on injuring a human. There were two other situations where an animal could be found guilty and punished ‘accordingly’—as either a primary or accessory agent of a religious crime—when accused of either bestiality or witchcraft (Newman in Beirnes, 39).

Evans, too, emphasized the powerful influence religion held over the medieval understanding of witchcraft and bestiality. The categorical proximity between witchcraft and bestiality accusations was extremely close and they were often employed in tandem as mechanisms for prosecution in the medieval courts (Beirnes, 39–40). For example, a woman named Françoise Sécretain was sentenced to burn alive because it was ‘shown’ that she had had carnal relations with a dog, a cat and a cock and because she had admitted being a witch—under pain of torture, undoubtedly—and that her animals were earthly incarnations of the devilⁱⁱ (Beirnes, 40).

Likewise, in cases regarding bestiality, the sinful danger of these acts were emphasized though the damning lens of Judeo-Christianity and categorized as a form of buggery—like humans involved in witchcraft, these creatures were viewed as threats to the divine order of the universe (ibid). This follows the divine dictate found in *Exodus* (xxii, 19) “Whosoever lieth with a beast shall surely be put to death” (Beirnes, 40)—though it is not stated whether man or god should action this directive. Many cases of such “buggery” were recorded by Evans and others—and there is a certainly a preponderance of farm animals—particularly the goat, which, in cases involving witchcraft, was usually seen to be either a consort or actual manifestation of the devil. In cases where bestiality was found to have been committed, both human and animal were put to death—by fire, beheading or hanging—and their bodies and effects buried together (ibid). Beirnes challenges Evans’ assertion that prosecution of animals for crime halted after 1800 due to an emerging scientific *Weltanschauung* and the concomitant rise of rational legal thinking. This is echoed by Finkelstein who claims that the biblically dictated trials fell away with the spread of scientific enlightenment. Beirnes, however, argues that the peak of the trials occurred between 1600 and 1700, at the time when scientific rationalism was at its height. He also notes that there is evidence that they continued on into the nineteenth century when other seemingly irrational acts had ceased. He cites Tester’s explanation of the decline as an alternative—the rise of urban environments and the increasing development of a moral sensibility towards animals (Tester in Beirnes, 40–41).

Beirnes shows that Evan’s critics, for the most part, in their efforts to undermine his tendency towards sarcasm and proclivity for Darwinian Evolutionism, failed to recognize two aspects of his work which indicated the progressiveness of his thinking in other areas of cultural politics and a sensibility which is evidenced much before the vast majority of his contemporaries. It is relevant to my discussion since his interest in criminal trials and the treatment of human and non-human animals within the judicial system arises out of a shared concern Beirnes claims is very much evident in all of his later texts. Beirnes contends that every page of *The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals* contains some aspect of his discontentment with the mistreatment of animals and for this he believes he deserves recognition as a forerunner of the animal rights movement of his era. He references what is commonly regarded as the founding text of the modern movement—Henry Salt’s *Animal Rights* written in 1892 which argues that if animals are to be held responsible judicially for injuries to man, then, by the same account, one should infer that they also should enjoy legal

protection against human cruelty (cited in Evans, in Beirnes, 41). He refers, too, to Bentham's now well-known objection to the suffering of animals, to which Evans added:

The ethical corollaries to Darwin's doctrine of the origin of the species and to his theory of development through descent under the modifying influences of environment and natural selection have already passed these bounds of beneficence not only by demanding the mitigation of cruelty to slaves, but also by the abolition of slavery, and not only by inculcating the kind treatment of animals by individuals, but also by asserting the principle of animals' rights and the necessity of vindicating them by imposing judicial punishments for their violation.

(Evans in Beirnes, 42)

The other point that Evans is rarely accredited for and which is also worth mentioning in the context of criminality which surrounds a large proportion of my work, is located in the second chapter of the book, entitled "Medieval and Modern Penology" which was written as an intentionally polemical contribution to a mounting campaign against the rising popularity of criminal anthropology—championed by the Italian School of Lombroso, Garofalo and Benedikt (Beirnes, 42). This school of thought represents a marriage between the study of humans and criminals—from a biologically reductive point of view. It is based on the theory that there are tangible physical links between the nature of a crime and the personality and/or physical appearance of the offender. Of course, this line of thought divorces crime from any relevant social structure or politically critical context, locating crime wholly within the individual ('Criminal Anthropology', Feb. 2010). Evans scoffed at his contemporary criminal anthropologists, rightly arguing that their dependence on biological determinism denied the responsibility and accountability of their actions. Although this approach still fails to account for the social factors that may lead an individual to crime, it is a great improvement on the horrific reductionism of the former, whose tenets are as dangerous as any form of Social Darwinism.

Beirnes correctly states that how one understands the practice of animal trials depends to a large degree on the differential social construction of concepts such as "punishment" and "animal trials". The situation has changed considerably, as Beirnes observes—one would hardly be able to find someone in contemporary times who would seriously argue that animals commit human-oriented crimes and animals are certainly not formally prosecuted in courts of law represented by solicitors to presided over by judge and jury. However, he contends, that far from declining, there has been a phenomenal rise in the number of animals "tried" and lawfully killed since the time when other theorists have argued for their decline and disappearance. He asks us to consider that the medieval courtroom has merely been replaced by the animal kill shelter. The intimidating powers of the medieval criminal law, capable of punishing animals, have been usurped by overwhelming screeds of bureaucratic rules and regulations that allow animal control officers to end animal's lives whenever it is deemed fitting (43–44). Lethal injection centres and vacuum chambers can surely be argued to exist as rightful heirs to the rack and gibbet iron. Beirnes' concludes that the practice of executing animals publicly for crimes against

humans has simply been replaced with their silent execution—without representation or visibility—for new socially recognized crimes such as ‘homelessness’ and ‘aggression’ (44).

Awareness and development of an ethic of the animal increased as the strictures of medieval Europe relinquished some of their tenebrous hold, and Erica Fudge discusses two prominent theories of ethics which arose at the onset of modernity in England. She argues that historians of the period tend to underestimate the complexity of attitudes that existed towards animal killing prior to the nineteenth century, presuming, as in the case of Keith Thomas, that the *modus operandi* was “the cruelty of indifference to animal suffering” (Thomas in Fudge, *Killing Animals*, 99). Fudge claims that to presume that animals existed outside of moral consideration is to ignore competing strains of compassion that was evidenced—and to presume a mere barbaric savagery as the status quo of the period. To do so is to forget that the era is remembered for its eloquence in certain cultural arenas—such as can be found in the plays of Shakespeare and in the poetry of John Donne.

The most orthodox and widely spread ethical framework of the early modern period, emerging from both a classical and Christian tradition, has been termed the “Inward Government Theory” by Philip P. Hallie and was essentially dualistic in nature—resting on the perceived rift between flesh and spirit. The moral aspiration was to goodness and its highest state was to be found through control of the mind and the exercise of reason over the passions, the same sentiment that exemplified The Age of Enlightenment. The passions—belonging to what Nicholas Coeffeteau termed “the sensitive appetite”—(Fudge, 100) must be directed through rational thought to prevent a descent, literally, to the level of the beast. As Fudge shows, Inward Government Theory relied on a principle division between human and animal, mirroring the binary between reason and the lack thereof, the animal obviously falling into the latter category through attribution of their apparent non-existent awareness and self-control. The exercising of the will and the government of the passions is the duty of those who possess these propensities—it is thus that animals fill the position of absolute other in relation to the self-governing human (*ibid*). Animals, according to this model, entertain no crossovers in the human realm—they are that against which humans position themselves (*ibid*). Resting upon this polarity, the centrality of the individual—and hence of the self—is affirmed. This moves attention away from governance of the community and the affect of one’s actions or lack is emphasized in terms of their impact on the self. For example, Seneca’s *Discourse on Clemencie* relates cruelty—a human evil—as instances of the devolution of man into an enraged creature that falls into a “beast-like rage in bloud and wounds, and laying by the habite of a man, to translate himsele to a wilde beast” (Seneca, trans. Thomas Lodge, in Fudge, 101). Such a theory is pivotal to the majority of writings in early modern England—many of which are influenced by Aquinas’ marriage of classical and Christian thought. The Chain of Being, Aquinas states, is a vast ladder of superiority that is completely natural, its existence thereby legitimating the killing of plants by animals and the killing of animals by humans, respectively. Moreover, it is a duty to show regard for its structure and to refuse to kill or eat an animal exists as a challenge to God’s Word. Essentially, the treatment of an animal, which extends to their care—lies in their value as a possession, the details of which I have discussed in the previous section on animal trials. The care of an animal, ultimately reflects on the status of the human soul in God’s consideration and this anthropocentrism is entirely continuous with the precepts of the Inward Government Theory as is iterated by Joseph Hall: “The mercifull man rewardeth his own soule; for Hee that followeth righteousnessse and mercy, shall find righteousness, and life, and glory; and *therefore*, is blessed *forever* (Hall in Fudge, 103).

Fudge contrasts the egocentrism of this approach to a different theoretical framework, that can be traced to Montaigne and his followers—one, she claims, that focuses the gaze onto the other—and reflects a new sensibility that initiated in the early seventeenth century in England. Montaigne’s essay ‘Of Cruelty’, published and expanded in the 1580’s, is claimed to be one of the most powerful essays on ethics ever written (Hallie in Fudge, 103). Montaigne’s remarkable approach was to turn away from the self—and abandon the centrality of the Inward Government Theory—and look instead at the other, the one on whom the cruelty is inflicted. Moreover, he moves away from a dependency on reason in a consideration of sentience as a necessary feature of perceiving the world. This movement away from rationalism leads Montaigne to include animals in his discussion, whose suffering he claims fills him with distress. His account remains logical and does not resort to sentiment (Fudge, 103–4). He bases his theory on a perceived sense of mutual obligation between humans and animals—whereby both are able to communicate their suffering. He cites, for example, the deer who finally surrenders after finding himself cornered, throwing himself back and shedding tears, which Montaigne interprets as a plea for mercy—creating an unpleasant spectacle. The feelings that Montaigne interprets as being communicated by the deer he interprets as suffering; it is through the sentience of the deer—the other outside of the self—that he locates his focus (104). There have been numerous critics who either ignore Montaigne’s writings on these issues or dismiss them without fully engaging with them. David Quint dismisses him as essentially an Inward Government Theorist whose very humanity separates him from the ‘cruelty’ of the animal world—typified by the predator/victim relationship of the hunt. Montaigne has stated, in fact, that he recognizes the superiority of animals over humans in many instances and recognizes the feebleness of man’s inability to imitate them (104–105); it seems that Quint has misunderstood the thrust of Montaigne’s attendance to the sensate in lieu of a hard contract with reason. Another critic, George Boas, undermines the relevance of Montaigne’s approach, referring to his theriophily—or love of animals—as belonging to the “*genre of the Paradoxes*”, which regarded writing as merely “for literary effect and not for demonstrating truth” (Boas in Fudge, 105). The reality of the meaning of animals, here, is limited to representation of a presumably fictional nature and so the impact of his theory is overlooked. Fudge asserts that Montaigne’s centrality cannot be reconciled with the necessarily marginal nature of his views on animals. His contemporaries, however, were more likely to take his arguments seriously, but disregard them on other terms that labelled concern for other creatures as womanish and weak. Fudge relates Montaigne’s views on animals to English writers of the time, drawing comparisons between the ethical models they presented that emphasized the pursuit of a good life—as opposed to the good self—of the Inward Government Theory—models which allowed the consideration of animal suffering to become feasible (105–106).

Natural philosophy, a practice which reached its peak during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, involved a study of the natural world—particularly because it offered an enhanced understanding of the Creator. An implication that accompanied this approach was that the literary context of the creature was of greater import than its physical environment or condition. Animals were assigned meaning which was usually of a symbolic nature that allowed humans to access moral and philosophical truths through stories and other literary practices. They also provided a connection point with humans, the latter able to acquire any of the attributes an animal might hold distinction for, whether it was a passion, a virtue or something more contemptuous: “The cunning of a fox, the loyalty of a dog, the timidity of a hare, all of these apparently predetermined animal behaviours were used to explain more generally the concepts of cunning, loyalty and timidity in humans”

(Fudge, 107). This figurative practice of representation provided the means through which animals were understood and recognized by people. It was believed that this system of signs was sent by God in order to enable humanity to better itself through association with the animal as a type of conduit for His word. This is a rather grotesque form of anthropomorphism which, nonetheless, reduces the distance between humans and animals—since certain features can be shared—whilst simultaneously maintaining the hierarchy of power. The virtues displayed by the animal are not of its will, but derived from ‘natural instinct’. Fudge connects this practice with the philosophy of Montaigne through the fact that both approaches bridge the gap between humans and animals—and both embrace the assertion that through animals, humans can live more ethical lives (107). Robert Cleaver displays a willingness to embrace a compassionate stance towards animals by extending himself beyond the argument of reason to the level of feeling. An animal’s sentience is what Cleaver believes should compel humans to show it ‘mercy’. Their very lack of reason drives Cleaver’s argument, unlike Montaigne, who does not view an inability to reason as a necessary lack—he chooses not to focus on this aspect as a defining distinction (108). Joseph Hall, in a discussion of the mistreatment of an ass by Balaam, is filled with remonstrance for his “cruel usages of the beast” (Hall in Fudge, 108) but he bases it on God’s wrath being enflamed at this act of cruelty to His creature. Here, as Fudge shows, cruelty is not a path to sin—as was the view of Aquinas—but it is a sin in itself—the animal is the receiver of the cruelty and not merely the owner’s harm is taken into consideration. He does continue to view them, essentially, as creatures placed upon the earth for the benefit of humans, but he makes an important distinction between harming animals for practical reasons and creating victims out of them merely for man’s pleasure. This does show a vast improvement from the former consideration of them as mere objects whose death or injury meant the owner—alone—had been slighted. Montaigne’s theory remains far more progressive in this sense (Fudge, 109).

Montaigne’s assertion in ‘Of Cruelty’, that “We owe justice to men, and mercy to other creatures that may be capable of receiving it” (Montaigne in Fudge, 109) is based on the implication that justice can only be experienced by humans—both in delivery and in reception—and is congruent with presiding English law. As I have discussed in length above, animal trials were glaringly absent in England when compared with continental Europe and animals were declared *deo dandum* and assessed according to their financial value to their owner—and hence receiver—of punishment (ibid). Fudge maintains, however, that a conflicting ethical framework regarding animals existed in contrast to the simply reductive *deo dandum*. She cites some examples where bears were occasionally baited and allowed to be killed in zoos—their death as objects of entertainment was enforced at an institutional level, this practice only occurred occasionally since they were extremely expensive to import. In another case, a bear was found to have killed a child and eaten its face off and in this case, she argues, its punishment was more correlative to the treatment of a creature with feelings and the capacity for emotion. These two examples show that the bears are, on one hand, baited and hence treated as if they are mere beasts, yet, on the other, they are afforded at least some capacity of intent and punished accordingly (112). This, she believes reflects a more complex ethical framework than is largely afforded the early modern era since conflicting ideas and attitudes regarding an animal’s propensity for intentional action and its consequent treatment was in evidence.

Montaigne’s animal characterizes the ethical focus on the good life, as opposed to the preponderance on the good self emerging from the still largely dominant animal-as-object of Inward Government Theory.

Whereas the animals marginalized from the focus of the good self exist largely as theoretical abstractions, Montaigne's animals are grounded in more realistic, affective, experiential terms (Fudge, 114). Montaigne asks "When I play with my cat, who knows if I am not a pastime to her more than she is to me?" (Montaigne in Fudge, 114). The confrontation between human and creature is real and refers to a specific cat, his own cat, and ponders *her* feelings—there is no generic cat involved here at all.

In a more recent essay Derrida once again presents a conundrum of ethical implications involving human perception of non-human thought. Fudge claims that Derrida, too, isolates the western preoccupation with reason or *logos* as the source of the approach that undermines an ethical engagement with animals. In speaking of an animal's capacity to experience, Derrida highlights an empirical shift away from Cartesian dualism, reinforcing that to maintain an ethical standpoint is not to enquire whether an animal is capable of logical discussion but to ask about its capacity for suffering. This underlines a movement in Western philosophy towards contemplating human relationships with animals, signalled through progressive thinkers such as Jeremy Bentham who stated in 1789: "The question is not, can they reason? Nor, can they talk? But can they suffer?" (Bentham in Fudge, 114).

Furthermore, Derrida contends that when one studies the particular manner in which the concept of the animal is conceived and articulated in the West, this allows for consideration an understanding their abuse. A distinction Derrida outlines, that was given by "man at the origin of humanity" (Derrida in Fudge, 115), exists between the general singular, that is, "the animal" and the particular singular, "*that* animal". Human interpretive decisions—whether metaphysical, ethical, juridical or political—depend on the general singular of the word "*Animal*". It is *the* reason individual animals are not included in conceptual matrices—understanding of them, and us, would cease to exist as we know it were it not for this primary distinction (ibid).

This assertion is entirely continuous with the acceptance of reason as the central principle cementing western philosophy. Aristotelian philosophy, still construed largely as the bastion of western thought, refers to the "inorganic soul" as the foundation of all knowing, existing as an invisible essence delineating animals as ideas prior to any physical existence (Fudge, 115). Fudge arrives at an interesting conclusion, for in drawing attention to the conflicting attitudes that existed historically—that allowed for the enjoyment of the spectacle of animal death whilst seeing it as an instance of justice—she returns the reader to the present. To focus on historical interpretation alone implicitly presumes that present times exist in a vast contrast of improvement—in this case, good lives are strived for, for both human and non-human animals. The reality is that Derrida's essay is polemical and was written this decade, its contentious relevance earmarking the continued disjunction between living for the life of the self or for the other (ibid). The contradictions continue and allow for a spectrum of conflicting attitudes towards animals, such as the false paradox of anthropomorphism and vivisection, to continue to flourish socially and individually. The world remains decidedly anthropocentric, marginalizing the experience of all negatively differentiated beings as other, whilst highlighting the suffering of some of those others as abominable—'the animal', at times, becomes 'that animal'. The contradictions of early modern Europe abound resplendently in postmodernity and the ethics of our good selves enable them.

In the very first edition of *Society and Animals* published in 1980, Shapiro drew attention to the fact that language and all of its concomitant systems is instrumental in the construction and perpetuation of the divide

between human and non-human animals. He asks: why through language, do we create a categorical divide between ourselves and non-human animals—where they exist as the necessary inferiors, as the negation of ourselves? (Shapiro, 3). This phenomenon emerges from a great historical heritage. If one considers the etymological roots of the issue, one can see how the original meaning of the words have become obscured to a level where they are almost at the point of representing contrasting meaning to that which they first denoted. *Anima* originally denoted that which was enlivened with a soul—now animate life is demoted to a subcategory for that which it once represented and its members are more than often construed as existing without a soul, at least according to monotheistic religious doctrine and scientific rationalism. *Humus*, meaning soil, and *homo*, meaning man, are often attributed as the etymological roots of ‘human’, which, ironically, is now given the same status as that which *anima* once denoted. This humanistic discourse initiated in the Enlightenment, replacing the prevailing self-valourizing categories of religious discourse—such as Christian versus heathen. Shapiro correctly references what he terms the ‘linguistic sleight of hand’ that perpetuates further hierarchical divisions such as us/them and insider/outsider and transforms a subcategory—such as man—into a superordinate category presiding over its inferior—such as woman, or beast (ibid).

A 2001 article by Stibbe records a then recent ‘linguistic turn’ in social theory. Citing Burr (1995) he describes the focus on language in analyzing social constructionism—to provide a means for analyzing experience and power relations—which has been rather extensively examined (Stibbe, 145). For the most part, language and its relationship to power has focused on the role of discourse in oppression and exploitation, however, until well into the nineties, only rare exceptions evinced discussions of the wielding of power by humans over other species. Some of the earliest writings to consider domination over non-human animals emerged through the work of eco-feminists, who aimed to expose the mentality underlying the exploitation of women and nature—the latter included non-human animals. In 1997 Berry echoes Spiegel in drawing the ‘dreaded comparison’ between human and non-human slavery, their writing comprising a fundamental aspect of the burgeoning animal rights movement which can be traced back to Singer, amongst others, who draws a comparison between oppression of people and animals (Stibbe, 146).

Whereas a Marxist slant on critical discourse analysis stresses the role of ideology in oppression, Stibbe emphasizes that with animals, the power that is exerted is completely coercive since they cannot and undoubtedly would not consent to this treatment. There is no submission to a false consciousness indicative of hegemonic control by animals, however a consenting majority of the human population allows for this oppression to perpetuate and it is in the manufacture of this consent that language plays a formative role (Stibbe, 146–147). This ideological struggle, in westernized nations, occurs primarily through the relationship between language and the media—for example, public opposition for both scientific research and the use of fur increased markedly following a raised level of media coverage (Kopperud and Jones in Stibbe, 147). Intimately bound up with language and discourse is the manner in which animals are culturally constructed, and hence treated—it is not merely a matter of passive representation but, rather, the construction of discourse is actively involved in the making and reconstitution of meaning. Ideology works most successfully at its insidiously implicit best—for instance, when operating as socially accepted ‘common sense’ facts that serve, in reality, to maintain hierarchical power relations (Fairclough in Stibbe, 147–148).

Stibbe analyses a series of publicly available texts on large-scale animal product utilization using a method of critical discourse analysis together with a theory of fact construction that provides “an account of the role of language, language use, discourse or communicative events in the (re)production of dominance and inequality” (van Dijk in Stibbe, 149) in order to expose embedded ideologies (Stibbe, 148–149). The theory of fact construction employed by Stibbe derives from Chilton and Schäffner’s methodology “interpretively linking linguistic details...to the strategic political functions of coercion, resistance, opposition, protest, dissimulation, legitimization and delegitimation” (Chilton and Schäffner in Stibbe, 149) to reveal hidden ideological assumptions on which this type of discourse is based. From pragmatics and semantics to syntax and morphology of the English language, Stibbe analyses the manner in which animals are socially constructed and hence, treated by society.

Singer discusses the fact that the English language, like other languages, reflects the prejudice of its users—for example, the negative differentiation between humans and ‘other’ animals that serves to distance one and prevent one from seeing animal suffering (Stibbe, 149). On a lexical level, the very words used conceal truths and distance one from their physical reality—we eat a *carcass*, not a corpse, it is *meat*, not bits of cooked animal flesh that is obtained through *slaughter*, not murder (150). Animals are not only separated linguistically as different, but also as inferior—the two requisite categories for oppression. Numerous examples exist of nouns, adjectives and verbs that acquire polysemous inflections in metaphorical constructs that continue to adversely articulate animals in derogatory ways: *stupid cow*; *ugly dog*; *crowding over your achievements*; *getting completely rat-assed* (a local colloquialism); *pig-brained*; *rude bitch*. Multitudes of idiomatic references reflect this exact attitude or contain images of cruelty: *going to the dogs*, *not enough room to swing a cat*, *the straw that broke the camel’s back*. Interestingly, Stibbe points out that the only positive animal idioms appear to be found in the descriptions of wild birds and insects: *wise as an owl*, *the bees’ knees*, *as happy as a lark*. Stibbe rightly draws attention to the pattern that emerges here: The degree of negativity of the idioms found in mainstream discourse involving references to animals is directly proportional to the closeness of the level of dominance between humans and a particular species (Stibb, 150).

Syntactically, animals figure differently to humans as well in terms of their ideological positioning—for example when they move from the phase of being alive to deceased, they change from objects to substance, from count nouns to mass nouns. One offers *some* beef but never does this language rule bend regarding humans. When on a wildlife tour in Africa, it is possible to see *giraffe* or *gemsbok* when a whole group is observed, despite the nouns existing in singular. This is contingent on the ideological assumption that each animal exists as a replaceable representative of a group, diminishing their importance as individuals (151). The *us* and *them* divide—integral to exclusionary discourse—predominates when animals and humans are spoken about, the ‘*us*’ exclusively referring to humans, those of the inclusive circle. Furthermore, lack of individual subjectivity is stolen from animals when they are accorded the status of an object through pronoun use, such as referring to ‘*it*’ instead of ‘*him*’ or ‘*her*’. Objects are bought, sold and owned by people and animals are, in lexical terms, predominantly referred to in extremely similar or even identical terms the majority of the time. The same treatment of a human subject would be considered to reference an instance of immoral domination and considered unacceptable in most situations (151). Stibbe remarks that, like the treatment of women in a male-dominated society, in a society whose mainstream discourse reinforces interests involving the utilization of

animals, it is not surprising to see such negative attitudes prevailing—attitudes that are integrated seamlessly within everyday language. Not only does this reflect a hierarchical and dominant attitude of exploitation but it also reveals the extent to which humans are willing to use language to conceal and condone their actions (152).

There are a number of specific contexts in which the manipulation of rhetoric manifests as particularly pointed systems of the domination of non-human animals in the modern West. Two of these are particularly relevant, not only in the context of New Zealand, but also in a related manner, to my own performance pieces, particularly *Freakshow I* and IIⁱⁱⁱ—the rhetoric of the scientific and farming industries.

In a paper that examines archival and experimental cases of the labelling and the concomitant treatment of animals, Rajecki et al show that an animal's treatment—and ultimately its fate, is directly dependent upon the cultural category it is assigned. This differential treatment is true in all cases that were analyzed. Whether it is through the moral status it is accorded or its value on a commercial or political level, its experience is directly related to its status relative to human attitudes, beliefs and behaviours (Rajecki et al, 46–48). Although the degree of severity and type of treatment differed according to the particular social context of the individual, this trend remained concrete in their findings. This phenomenon is particularly visible when one considers that animals of the same species can simultaneously be viewed as objects and as pets depending on their designated function in society (Arluke in Rajecki et al, 46). Consider the treasured show-jumping pony versus the 'nags' processed for the pet food industry, or the spoilt pet mouse versus the lab animal undergoing painful vivisection for the pharmaceutical industry—and the 'vermin' that raid our pantries during the winter months. The language of scientific narrative reveals very specific conventions which when analyzed, point to devices used to obscure and reveal certain elements to suit the purposes of scientific progress. Most apparent is the obvious lack of detail of the experience of the animal—particularly its death which remains obscured through euphemisms, omission and circumlocution by a hand somehow devoid of human agency. Particularly in connection with the rise of the anti-vivisectionist movement of postmodernity, scientists have found an increasing need to engage in public rhetoric to gain support for experimentation—whilst demonizing the animal rights movement, increasingly, as dangerous terrorists evolved from the more harmless lunatics of yesteryear (Birke and Smith, 23). In, for example, a 'counter-crusade' launched by the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS) two counter-strategical tactics have been evidenced. The first is to convince potential supporters that the need for vivisection is based on serious and unavoidable need; the second attributes a lack of understanding to the public whom supposedly cannot understand the nature or the need for animal experiments. Increasingly, instead of turning to journalistic propaganda for its information, the animal rights movement is turning to an assessment of the published accounts of vivisection sourced in scientific journals so as to avoid this last retort (Birke and Smith, 25). Increasingly, too as awareness of animal advocacy grows, scientists and other professionals are campaigning for the animal rights movement and contributing their knowledge to counter the once seemingly impenetrable stronghold of the pro-vivisection faction^{iv}.

The scientific paper is a product that proves very revealing once analyzed, existing as 'an end in itself', constructed more to answer particular critics than as a faithful representation of what occurred in the laboratory. Researchers have been attributed with a dual existence—that which assumes consciousness in animals during interaction with them whilst denying it through the detachment exemplified in scientific writing (27). There are some key factors emerge from Birke and Smith's analysis that function as key indicators of the role the scientific

paper plays in constructing a way of presenting data separate from an animal's sentence. One of the most prevalent themes is that most, if not all of the most relevant details about the care of the animal are left out—for the most part death itself is minimized or entirely omitted, even when its eventuation could likely be regarded as critical detail. Furthermore, the experience of the animal remains subordinated by the technicality of the procedure at hand. The act of omitting the details and numbers of animals involved in experiments glosses over not only the specifics of what each animal endures, but also functions to obscure any methodological deficiencies that may arise (Birke and Smith, 27–28). This vagueness enables fewer questions—regarding the propriety, effectiveness and necessity of the procedures—to be answered, since their specifics simply cannot be framed.

Various tactics are employed to obscure the death of the animals used for vivisection purposes. Scientific narrative frequently employs euphemism to minimize or alter the fact that the animal has died during the procedure. Use of the word 'sacrifice' is peculiarly predominant, its usage transforming the meaning from the mere killing of the laboratory animal to a connotation of ritual sacrifice in the name of scientific progress. Another euphemism commonly utilized is 'harvested', usually associated with the collection of bodily tissues (28–29). Death is reduced to a benign event, commonly associated with reaping the benefits of one's work with the land—receiving one's due reward. Another tactic that is used is that of circumlocution, which enables the writer to gloss over the severity of the procedures and the common end result of death—often through the use of the passive tense combined with a multitude of Latin words: "...four [dogs] were lost through intraoperative exsanguinations" (30). When one considers these methods employed in concert, the effect of the overall reduction of the animal's death on the reader becomes blatant—in fact its demise must be actively read into the text. Even when the death of the animal must be acknowledged since it is necessarily incorporated into the experiment, the living experiential animal is subsumed beneath screeds of technical jargon: "The electrodes were two hypodermic needles...[which] remained in place for the six-hour measurement period...[the voltage was increased] until a vocalization was elicited" (Birke and Smith, 30–31).

Lynch makes a useful distinction between the "naturalistic animal"—that which is purposefully omitted from the scientific narrative due to the messiness of its variability and very instantiation as a breathing being, and the "analytic animal", which essentially transforms seamlessly into a clean citation of useful scientific data (Lynch in Birke and Smith, 32–33). It is the analytic animal that provides the perfect scientific prototype—its lack of subjectivity allowing its parts, literally, to be absolutely substituted for its entirety in an ultimate materialistic exchange that earmarks the tacit scientific agreement of standardization in the animal model.

The creation of the laboratory artifact, argue Birke and Smith, is enhanced by the spatial separation between animal and scientist, where the methods employed, once purged of their extenuating contexts, provide a residual description free of detail that allows for the contestation that might arise from reference to the 'naturalistic animal' (33–34).

Scientific writing typically appeals to authority, often through extensive citation, reference to academic allies and the use of phrases that only refer to parts of the animal's body. This transforms—as Latour has observed—linear prose into "a folded array of successive defence lines" (Latour in Birke and Smith, 34) and is a giveaway sign of a scientific text. This methodology includes implicit reference to the consideration of ethical

questions regarding the animals in use, and in doing so simultaneously avoids ever making these issues explicit. These techniques, together with the overriding passive voice when any reference to the animal is made, serve to remove the effect of human agency as a direct cause of the vivisection undertaken. It is interesting to note that the scientist's voice only tends to become active in the text when intellectual processes, such as the derivation of a hypothesis, are presented. Contrasting the reality, the 'messiness' of day-to-day science with the subsequent, polished written reports, Gross has emphasized the constructed nature of scientific papers, describing them as "fictionalized, idealized accounts in which "style...is not a window on reality, but the vehicle of an ideology that systematically misdescribes experimental and observational events" (Gross in Birke and Smith, 36). Scientific writing, as it has been generally noted, has only increased in codification, particularly since the 19th century, and a general consensus agrees that, together with the increasing disappearance of the 'naturalistic animal' this is likely a response to criticism of the use of animals in experiments. Journal editors also exert pressure on the authors of scientific papers to reduce the emotional impact of any damage to animals to boost their readership and patronage. Scientific writing, then, is a particular, often highly fictionalized construction of reality cemented upon the laboratory and its apparatus. The experience of the animal—their sentience, their physical integrity and indeed, their suffering are incidental to that construction and, for the most part deliberately obscured (Birke and Smith, 37–39). One should question then, whether the public face of science is justified in damning public condemnation based on an argument for ignorance when that face is so deliberately and deceptively masked.

Pain is a thread that runs continually throughout my work and hence its presence is a constant in my writing. It is a reality that cannot be ignored for the bodies that my work references and articulates. It is both infinite in its manifestation and yet achingly familiar, its presence lurking wherever the carceral body is defined against a 'superior', less marked form. It is present in the disabled body—in the animal body that is defined through human boundaries—and in that sense one could argue that in no body is it more present than the vivisected body. This is the body used for human experiment that remains the most obscured through its very power to horrify, to revile, and to cause outrage. No other animal body remains so absolutely absent from public consciousness—this, the most tortured body that somehow remains within the thoroughfare of social consent, coercive or otherwise.

Before I depart this discussion to broaden my horizons to the farmed body—of which the vivisected body remains intimately tied, particularly in New Zealand, I wish to briefly draw attention to the scientific researcher's perception on pain. The scientific narrative precludes an insight into this, as we have seen, however some research has been done from a socio-cultural perspective into a subject still steeped in anathema.

Martin Pernick describes 'The Case of McGonigle's Foot'—a horror story which tells of a labourer named McGonigle from Philadelphia who, in 1862, fell and fractured his ankle. He was rushed to hospital where doctors immediately amputated his foot without anaesthesia—albeit ether anaesthesia had been discovered as a painless alternative to anyone undergoing surgery ten years previously. Records show that the hapless McGonigle was not alone in his misfortune. Pernick traces a direct connection between this and similar incidents and a complex ideology of pain that attributed pain sensitivity selectively—relative to social status, personal habits and the nature of the surgical operation. Those most sensitive to pain and therefore most likely to receive anaesthesia were non-recently immigrated white women of the wealthy classes, the elderly and those free of any history of alcohol or drug abuse. It is a simple transition to move further down the scale of hierarchy,

from the level of the drunken Irish immigrant of the lower classes, such as McGonigle and his ‘savage’ equals, to animals who were deemed even less sensitive to pain (Phillips, 61–62). The impact of this 19th century colonialist ethos had waned considerably, emerging from a growing sensitivity to humanitarian and animal rights issues that had begun as early as the Victorian era. In 1871 the British Association for the Advancement of Science published guidelines containing a requirement for the use of anaesthetics in experimentation in a response to antivivisectionist pressure, though records show that even the authors of these guidelines scarcely followed them (Phillips, 62–63). In contemporary times, regulations codified in the passage of protective legislation such as The Animal Welfare Act and the official guidelines of the National Institute of Health in the United States and other countries where vivisection is widely practiced, are designed to protect the animals used for scientific research. As Phillips study shows, these guidelines all require that animals used in scientific research are anaesthetized and that reports are produced—exemplifying the scientific narrative I have discussed—verifying the details of the experiments and the precautions taken to reduce and manage any pain the animal is likely to endure. For the most part, these regulations appear to be adhered to—since breaking the law is likely to unleash the wrath of animal advocates as well as the fact that scientific journals often refuse to publish work by scientists who avoid use of anaesthesia. This does not take into consideration that anaesthesia can be still be legally withheld when deemed ‘scientifically necessary’ (Phillips, 64–65).

These protective boundaries of anaesthesia are where the legislation and it seems, the human capacity for compassion seem to halt abruptly where vivisection is concerned. Phillips study shows that whilst, in theory, the dispensation of analgesics is also ‘required where necessary’, no specific conditions legally bind the scientist to their administration. The glaringly vast expanse between the mandates provided through the welfare acts and the practice of ensuring sufficient relief from suffering is emphasized in a system where the pain of the non-human animal is barely considered as an issue worthy of contemplation at all—and remains entirely contingent upon individual judgement (68). In the 23 laboratories that were visited in her study, not once was the administration of analgesics observed by Phillips and she notes that the large majority of researchers interviewed appeared surprised when asked about them, many stating that the idea had never occurred to them (69–70). These facts are disturbing when one considers that they all refute Cartesianism—not one researcher claimed that animals do not feel pain. Many of the scientists had pets of their own with whom they said they shared great empathy and whom they would never consider using in an experiment. The issue, at heart, lies in the fact that researchers consistently made clear distinctions between lab animals and pets and lab animals and wild animals (Phillips, 76–77). Although, in an ‘abstract’ sense, researchers were found to acknowledge the ability of animals to feel pain, they rarely, if ever, acknowledged its presence in the laboratories, despite failing to administer analgesics, continuing to view them primarily as statistical aggregates. Psychological and emotional suffering remained, predictably, even further removed from likely consideration. Phillips’ study effectively proves that the modern laboratory animal embodies the ‘savage’ and ‘drunk’ of the 19th century, denied the right to having their suffering alleviated due to their primary categorization as bearers of scientific data.

The farming industry is no less reliant on ideological categorization and the perpetuation of a hierarchical discourse for its practices than the vivisection industry—in fact, as I shall go on to discuss, these two industries are often inseparable, from the factors that motivate their success, to the factions that both support and

critique them. One would be hard pressed to discover a location where the farming and animal experimentation industries are more mutually reliant than in New Zealand Aotearoa.

As I have already mentioned, oppression of animals is often justified as being God-given through the oft-quoted verse from Genesis 1:28 where God gives humans ‘dominion’ over animals. Scientific discourse has replaced religion as the most commonly utilized form of rhetorical coercion designed to make oppression appear acceptable and unquestionable (Stibbe, 152). The discourse of evolutionary biology is the most commonly invoked argument utilized to cast the intensive farming and slaughter of animals in a natural light, equating these practices with the relationships between predator and prey that exist in the wild. Ott, a specialist in the field of industry-relevant bovine reproduction and who refers to humans as predators writes: “The natural relationship between predator and prey is congruent with neither an egalitarian nor an animal rights viewpoint” (Ott in Stibbe, 152). This statement alone rests on many assumptions, for example, that what applies to non-human, typical situations of predation can also be applied to atypical instances involving humans—this remains conveniently understated. Potter has remarked on the manner in which claims to scientific objectivity are used to bolster the ‘facticity’ of a version. Ott refers to his claims as ‘biological principles, evidence and rules’ whilst those of the animal rights movement are denigrated to the level of ‘dogma, falsities and ‘philosophical musings’—at best (ibid).

Selective discourses contribute further to the dominant representations of intensive farming—not only as natural but also as harmless—as a form of protection as opposed to incarceration: “Modern animal housing is well ventilated, warm, well-lit, clean and scientifically designed...Housing protects animals from predators, disease and bad weather (Harnack in Stibbe, 153). Here humans are now precluded from the category of predator and are translated to the protector, whilst the wild animal is produced as the threat to the domestic animal (Potter, 1996 in Stibbe, 153). Euphemisms abound in this excerpt, which remains typical of the rhetoric produced by Corporate Agriculture—the filthy, cramped, cold, hovel of a cage essentially rearticulated into the type of residence one might find in a plush middle-class real estate catalogue (Stibbe, 153–154).

Once one examines the internal discourse of the animal products industries, the focus on profit predominates, subduing any references to the comfort or environment of the animals to a bare minimum, if anything at all—the care for the living raw materials is arguably extended no further than in consideration of their value as commodities (Fiddes in Stibbe, 154). Metonymy is a linguistic device frequently employed by the meat industry to reduce and redirect attention away from the experience of the living animal: “Catching broilers is a backbreaking, dirty and unpleasant job” (Bowers in Stibbe, 154)—here the thousands of live birds are made synonymous with a cooking method; “There’s not enough power to stun the beef...you’d end up cutting its head off while the beef was still alive (Eisnitz in Stibbe, 154)—here the cow is equated with the generic term for her dead flesh. This is also employed in the case of living animals: bodies are ‘products’ that are ‘damaged’, not injured, and are ‘harvested’, as inanimate resources might be. The animal is viewed entirely as a resource, its subjectivity entirely forgone within this ideology where suffering simply does not figure (155).

A further linguistic device that is employed is that of nominalization, whereby both the agent and the receiver of the action are obscured or removed entirely from the discourse—the animal is reduced and reified to a description of products and yields. The following phrase provides a good example: “Catcher fatigue,

absenteeism and turnover can effect broken bones and bruises that reduce processing yields” (Bowers in Stibbe, 155). Although this sentence describes incidents where animals are injured, the actual animals are not mentioned and are replaced with the nominalizations: ‘broken bones’, ‘bruises’ and ultimately, ‘yields’. Notice that the effecter of the damage, the agent, is also absented from the description. Technical jargon further adds to the sense of detachment created through the rhetoric of the animal processing industries—Bowers refers to the processing of broiler chickens: “Perdigo’s Marau plant processes 4.95-pound broilers at line speeds of 136 bpm, running 16 hours a day...these stunning parameters induced pectoral muscle contraction resulting in blood splash” (Bowers in Stibbe, 156). The killing of the chickens is expressed mathematically through the phrase ‘bpm’ which translates to birds per minute, their electrocution and the uncharacteristically gory “blood splash” attributed to the parameters under which they are processed rather than any subjective agent.

A famous example of a meat industry trope illustrates the manner in which extended metaphor denigrates animals to the level of machines whilst avoiding reference to their suffering altogether: “The breeding sow should be thought of as, and treated as, a valuable piece of machinery whose function is to pump out baby pigs like a sausage machine” (Coats in Stibbe, 156).

Increasingly, as animal rights representation and action gain momentum, advocates employ tactics to counter the ideological binds inhering in mainstream discourse, utilizing terms of language to emphasize the *non-human animal’s* capacity to feel pain on a similar level to the *human animal*: “We chose [pets] and most likely bought them in a manner similar to the way in which human slaves were once...bought and sold....Keeping the term pets recognizes this hierarchy of ownership (Belk in Stibbe, 157). The lack of agency attributed to non-human animals is a recurring theme amongst all animal rights literature, the hierarchical nature of which has been compared with all other forms of human domination and oppression. Singer deliberately emphasizes terms referencing violence not normally tolerated by any society that would consider themselves ‘civil’ and worthy of exemplary status: “When animals are considered to be “tools”, a certain callousness toward them becomes apparent. Consider, for instance, Harlow and Suomi’s mention of their “rape rack” and the jocular tone in which they report on the “favourite tricks” of the female monkey (Singer in Stibbe, 157).

Stibbe’s work emphasizes the fact that the animal product industries produce a dominant discourse that, externally, contain an ideological structure that produce non-human animal oppression as natural and, internally, function to occlude subjectivity and agency for the sake of profit. His argument is that animal rights activists tactically counter this rhetoric on the level of discourse so as to produce a counter narrative that undermines the ubiquity of oppressive thought that would otherwise dominate the cultural imaginary.

Whilst it is absolutely necessary to locate the positioning and relations between persistent cultural narratives of power, it is not sufficient to limit one’s field of analysis to the level of discourse. To properly understand the repercussions of the figuring of the animal in culture and its continued placing relative to the representation of the marked body, one needs to locate the chiasmic point where, in contemporary discourse, the cultural animal resides relative to current problematizations of the human-animal divide. The following chapter entails a broadening of scope to a consideration of visibility relative to the dominant power relations of the suffering, carceral body that I have explored thus far. Here I shall begin to reveal a more concentrated analysis of the manner in which visibility, as a recurring and insistent motif, continues to inform the dialectic of embodied

difference in a culture whose spectacle is only truly measured relative to its relationship with prevailing forms of hierarchically informed representation.

CHAPTER 3. Notes

ⁱ The reason I cite these examples is that their content relates directly to the ideologies that are problematized and sardonically critiqued in my second performative installation dealing with meaning and the unNameable, *Reeler Than Real*.

ⁱⁱ The prosecution and punishment of witches and the strong correlation with animals is dealt with in both versions of *Freakshow: Performing Secrets*.

ⁱⁱⁱ This marks the crossing point between the ideology of rhetoric and visual representations of oppression.

^{iv} Many examples can be cited here, ranging from one of the most influential anti-vivisection scientific organisations, PCRM, initiated by Dr. Neal Barnard, to the local legal organisation, ARLAN and the largest national animal advocacy group, SAFE. Members comprise a whole range of the public sector, including professionals in teaching, science and law sectors who collaborate to campaign for advocacy, release educational tools and hold conferences aimed at educating the public into more humane approaches to human-animal relations.

CHAPTER 4

Mapping the Limits of the Visual Body: From Spectacle to Constraint

The most widespread belief is in a logical progression from virtual to actual, according to which no available weapon will not one day be used and such concentration of force cannot but lead to conflict. However, this is an Aristotelian logic which is no longer our own. Our virtual had definitely overtaken the actual and we must be content with this extreme virtuality which, unlike the Aristotelian, deters any passage to action. We are no longer in a logic of the passage from the virtual to the actual but in a hyperrealist logic of the deterrence of the real by the virtual.

(Jean Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, 27)

My observations so far have affirmed that, within any given western cultural context, a hierarchy necessarily exists. This imbalance is irrefutably grounded in the power relations informed by the prevailing ideology—the status quo of complicit homogeneity. The matrix comprising these power relations is complex and multifaceted and, as we shall continue to uncover, is capable of infinitesimal instances of articulation.

Such indices are fraught with spectacular moments that, particularly in hindsight, come to fruition as benchmarks of a retrospectively recognized age governed by an ethos whose specificity remains subject to its strongholds which are, more often than not, birthed from anxiety of usurpation.

Throughout this process of cultural incarceration, the spectacle of inequality remains informed through secrets whose wardens maintain guard under fervent cloaks of enforced invisibility. In order to uncover and reveal the shame concomitant with such acts of concealment, it is necessary to expose the mechanism that perpetuates such reductive representation. Key to this process is the acknowledgement of the cultural giant inseparable from any socio-politically informed ideology—Stigma.

The term ‘stigma’ is Greek in origin and, in keeping with an emphasis on visibility, designated a link between physical signs on the body and the denotation of a negative moral trait of the bearer. The signs were branded or sliced into the body to advertise the status of the signifier as a slave, criminal or traitor. The consequence of this was that these marked people were avoided whenever possible, particularly in the public arena (Erving Goffman, 203). When Christianity presided as the dominant ideology, two levels of metaphor imbued the term with further meaning. The first referred to signs of holy grace that manifested as eruptive blossoms on the skin. The second meaning alluded to the religious connotation referring to these blemishes as signs of a physical disorder. In a contemporary sense, stigma has come to be associated with a sense of disgrace that is less overtly recognized through a physical sign; furthermore, the type of disgrace is far more variable and multiplicitous, its articulation reliant on the type of social context governing the prejudices of that society (ibid).

Goffman asserts that an individual experiences a double social identity; the first is that characterization that comprises “an imputation made in potential retrospect” and eventuates in what he terms one’s virtual social identity. In contrast are the attributes one possesses in actuality, and Goffman articulates these as one’s actual social identity. Stigma arises when a ‘negative’ discrepancy occurs between the two types of identities. Individuals are always socially classified within the bounds of particular categories, but the process of stigmatization occurs when one is seen as possessing a single or series of attributes that are deemed inferior to the participants actively involved in the process of stigmatization. That individual then is placed in an hierarchically inferior category and socially discredited as a result. Stigmatization is not usually applied to the process of imbuing others within the social network with esteem. Goffman prefers to see stigma as comprising a language of relationships as opposed to merely a collection of attributes since specific features deemed offensive in some social contexts are applauded and embraced in others. The basis for stigmatizing shifts with varying social contexts and in outwardly similar situations—this is observable when these issues are subjected to a diachronic analysis. Stigma, he argues, is a special relationship between attribute and stereotype depending on the social context in question (204). Disability, for example, in most western social contexts is generally fashioned as a liability, as a stigma that works against the individual’s chances at upward mobility and independence. When parking in disability allocated parking spaces, however, it is increasingly deemed anathema to rob a person with a disability of a parking space if one is physically mobile and in that sense, a

person without a parking card that substantiates their need for the use of these parking areas is stigmatized as a selfish and thoughtless individual through the morality of the presiding social network.

For the most part, Goffman focuses on the attitudes complicit in the creation of stigma and the concomitant responses from those that are stigmatized—his is a sociological approach and he is primarily interested in the affective nature of the act of stigmatizing. His analysis is useful for illustrating the social hierarchy inhering in situations where stigma predominates. He describes the process of stigmatizing as one in which an individual who might otherwise be received into an ‘ordinary’ social intercourse is perceived as having a trait that obtrudes itself above all others in gaining attention, turning those he meets away from him in his undesired difference. Furthermore, he comments on the action of “benevolent social” behaviour designed to cushion the process whilst increasing its veracity. This inevitably places the stigmatized individual on a lower echelon of the social hierarchy, limiting their autonomy. Furthermore, the central trait of difference often acts as a springboard for attributing a plethora of further differential markers (204)—for example, the commonly exercised social faux pas that presumes the deaf individual is intellectually disabled because their mode of verbal articulation does not conform to standard rhythms of vocalization. It is important to realize, I believe, that for stigmatization to occur, the predominant social expectation is not one where the individual is said to advocate separatism, but rather is seen to respond to a tacit social agreement that the category of stigmatization necessarily exists and is invariably and unavoidably visible within any reasonably expected social context.

Goffman notes that the stigmatized person often accepts the characterization that they are associated with into their consciousness, swallowing their separatist status as a social given that inevitably exists to be exposed in comparison to a normalized model. Shame as a socialized reality thereby arises, as the individual ingests into their being awareness of their social defilement—an irrefutable truth of their existence as a member of the marginalized minority. The consciousness of acceptance cements this ideological positioning—the individual absorbs their contaminated status relative to the socially premised ‘norm’ (206–7).

Within the wider social consciousness, prevailing attitudes persist in visualizing stereotypes associated with the reductively articulated individual or group and—reactively, a common rebuttal, often viewed at the level of self-preservation, is witnessed through the stigmatized body speaking back, through displays of socially acknowledged ‘courage’ where the ‘victim triumphs against the odds’ (Goffman, 208). Many individuals socially differentiated through stigma, finding themselves working through a process of disavowal of their categorization, vocalize the limits that they perceive in the persona of the oppressor. This may incorporate a reversal of the process of judgement, where the socially marked person finds negative traits in the self-acclaimed wardens of their autonomous existence. Not only does the stigmatizer overtly reference the trait or feature of the individual that they feel marks one in a public setting; rather they invariably continue to contextualize it within a clichéd scenario of epic struggle and triumph. For example, Goffman cites the anecdote of a professional criminal:

You know, it’s really amazing you should read books like this, I’m staggered I am. I should’ve thought you’d read paper-backed thrillers, things with lurid covers, books like that. And here you are with Claud Cockburn, Hugh Klare, Simone de Beavoir and Lawrence Durrell!

You know, he didn't see this as an insulting remark at all: in fact, I think he thought he was being honest in telling me how mistaken he was. And that's exactly the sort of patronizing you get from straight people if you're a criminal. "Fancy that!" they say. "In some ways you're just like a human being!"

(Parker and Allerton in Goffman, 211)

Integral to the process of stigmatization is the act of the invasion of privacy of the reductively isolated individual (212)—it is significant to point out that it is very much on an individual, deeply personal level that the stigmatized individual experiences invasion. This is often experienced through the unashamed stare of undeniable fascination witnessed in the small child—whose parents, more often than not, appear ignorant to the gaze they implicitly advocate through lack of intervention. The unpleasant exposure experienced in the unashamed breach of personal boundaries is manifestly increased through the invasive act of the stranger, usually within a public space, who, in a brazen act of flagrant prying approaches the individual commonly perceived, visually, as different and boldly strikes up a conversation centred on their physical discrepancy (ibid) which, inevitably forces the individual into a situation where they are required to negotiate this affront to their privacy, whether it is through deflection, engagement or an angered shattering of the implicit codes of social politeness. Steve Roome describes an example of this invasion into his life during the seemingly simple act of a dinner excursion:

It does get tiresome. That's the truth of it; I'd be flat out bullshitting you if I said different. There are a lot of times when I'd like to be absolutely incognito, same as everyone else. Occasions like when I'm with my partner say. Maybe we've gone to a restaurant for dinner and it would be nice if people were looking at us because we're a great couple. Feeling happy for us, two people out having a great time together, which we are. But no, that's not the reason. The reason they are looking our way, is that I am eating with my feet.

(Roome in Busch, 16)

Lennard Davis raises an interesting issue regarding the social conditions for inclusion within the disabled community. He questions the manner whereby he might be deemed to 'fit' into it and how he might be shown to be 'authentically disabled'. The first pertinent point he raises is that the viewer inevitably provides a curious—and at times, I would suggest, invasive—response to disability—expecting to know what it is, to completely 'understand' it, essentially to have it revealed to them as if it is their right to know. The presence of a disability seems to produce a demand for a response—this reaction, Davis argues, is precisely that which produces the disability. Disability in this sense becomes a social product. Unlike other interventions around marginalized bodies marked as deviating from the norm such as those relating to class and gender, Davis contends that a stringent policing mechanism comes into effect that demands the subject deemed 'disabled' answer to their disability—explain its circumstance and extent, its origin, its difficulty—or, at the least, tolerate the demanding questions of the unrelenting gaze that are "always already asked" (*EN*, xvi)¹.

I have personally experienced this on numerous occasions and more often than not it is a situation which is impossible to predict. As a result, when one is inadvertently placed on display—in my case for example, an unplanned performance occurs every time I swim in a public space—one is required to raise one's guard in expectation of the inevitable onslaught of stares and at times, fallaciously 'innocent' conversations where the objective of satisfying morbid curiosity is flimsily masked beneath strained lighthearted banter. Depending on my mood and the manner in which I have been approached, I usually respond with varying degrees of hostility, often masking cutting sarcasm beneath seeming overt courtesy until the final moment where the caustic response is unleashed with the intention of directly undermining the intruder's sense of safety. It is also a response to the humiliation they necessarily impose through such a process of marking and isolating, of undermining one's sense of agency. When performed assertively and dexterously, this response acts with varying effectiveness to return the humiliation and swing the mirror of the spectacle back to its originator by highlighting their aggressive disrespect in a space where others can thus view them. Sometimes, however, one is unprepared for such an invasive intrusion into one's space, or perhaps one is not able to consolidate the correct defense or appropriate ammunition. At times all I do is grow silent, and walk away. This process, whereby a stranger demands entrance to one's person, whether exacted through the telling gaze or extrapolated to a verbal display, is the final performance that takes the form of the confessional, the finalization of the mechanism of stigmatization that is publicly ceded through the silent acquiescence of those that daren't intervene—daren't question the formation nor the finalization of this shameful spectacle.

Lerita Coleman, echoing Goffman in part, refers to stigma as a response to the dilemma of undesired difference as being reflective, largely, of the value judgements of the dominant group. She considers that, on a rudimentary yet fundamental level, stigma cannot exist without comparisons being made—the degree of difference acting as the gauge for ascertaining the level of stigma that is likely to emerge (216–217)—it is, in this sense, undeniably hierarchical—and something most, if not all social beings experience to a varying degree at some stage of their existence. It is what Coleman terms a “special kind of downward mobility...and...connotes a relationship” where one's place in the social hierarchy shifts (218)—concomitant with this shift, of course, is the degree of the cultural capital that individual is able to maintain. Stigma, indeed, is a specific type of classification whereby seemingly arbitrarily selected groups of signifiers—perhaps whose intertextuality remains opaque to one viewing this process who may be unfamiliar with the set of social markers in question—points to a specific signification within a particularized context. It thereby remains in the forefront of the group of pernicious social tools manipulated for attaining control.

Coleman references dislike and disgust as two of the principal affective responses to stigma as well as the more emotionally charged reaction of fear which, she argues, is predominantly an acquired response to the stigma differential (219). Coleman draws on a depth of research analysis to justify her assertion that whereas children often respond to difference with interest rather than fear, the predisposition to stigmatize and to associate certain situations with fear is passed on generationally through social learning. She offers the example of a child with cancer, Myra, who continued to have straightforward and honest interactions with other children, yet found that adults would exhibit consternation at the thought of her coming into close contact with their children for fear that she would contaminate them (Barbarin in Coleman, 220–221). The intensive hierarchical categorization and stringent social control that eventuate from a strictly stigmatized society invariably serves to perpetuate the status quo and, though Coleman points to the unpredictability of the factors that might be deemed

stigmatizable, I feel it is imperative to make the distinction that this apparent arbitrariness is more dubious when one society attempts to view and understand the stigmas from another society—one that exhibits prejudices they do not understand. Within a given society, there are many factors that work together within the vastness of the social matrix to create and cement the tacitly agreed upon stigmas that society reflects. I believe that each stigma or network thereof, when subjected to a rigorous analysis, will reveal the prejudices that gave rise to the hierarchical positioning of that society and furthermore, will demonstrate the means whereby certain prejudices have arisen as well as the reasons that the stereotypes that they represented became the icons for contagion and its associated fears.

The reasons that certain people within society are oppressed and ridiculed through the plethora of mechanisms that exist, is because they represent a manifestation of the undermining of the status quo, of a shift in the production of the articulation of popular, or rather, dominant meaning. Through isolating that which is feared, one can begin to form opinions about the very mettle of the society in question—its political ethos, its presiding ideologies and its policies on freedom and equality. One only has to look at the way that one major producer of fear—threat—is articulated in society, to understand why certain elements remain oppressed—stigmatized, excluded, dismissed and occluded. These are the elements that are perceived as a very real threat to the prevailing ethos of the social network, the shadows that threaten to shatter the clockwork maintenance of an inequalitarian society, undermining the privileges that are enjoyed by those holding the reins of power. Of utmost import to my argument, is that there is a key to undoing this spectacle through ascertaining the shame informing it and maintaining its strongholds. And this shame will differ with every context the process is applied to. That which is politically feasible for the dominant sector of society will directly inform the hegemonic prejudices, stereotypes and stigmas of that society. The key is to expose the secrets that create and maintain the imbalance of power through mechanisms of cruelty such as stigma—that lead to the inevitable polarity of those enjoying the spaces within the margins of the society that suits them and those hovering in the liminal frames surrounding it; the polarity of us and them, self and other, able and disabled, hero and criminal, human and animal, terrorist and politician, agitator and artist.

The method to unlocking the secrets is simple—it involves deconstructing, in the stringent, Derridean sense, the representations that are borne of that society. Of paramount importance in understanding the modes of carceral expression that allow the social constraints such as stigma to prevail and perpetuate, is to isolate the manner in which these are socially represented. In this way the bastions of society that bar the doors to the articulation and re-inscription of alternative possibility are exposed. Once this has been achieved, albeit only partially at a time if that is all that is possible, we can then, through the process of deconstruction, understand the techniques utilized to maintain this regime of articulation so that alternative possibilities for representation can be forged. In order to open the locks barring the doors to further possible worlds of expression and representation, this process, integral to that which I label performing the unNameable, actively battles against the predictability and bleak desolation a homogenous, strictured, policed society continues to birth.

One of the mechanisms that continues to stringently control and police bodies in the contemporary West, is the ideology of normalcy, which I have already discussed in an earlier chapter with reference to Davis, who refers to it as a location of the Foucauldian bio-power. Maintaining the ableist/disabled polarity is the status quo supporting the individual identified as ‘normal’ who enjoys the social buttressing supporting their gaze and general interaction, whilst simultaneously inhibiting and suppressing the will and agency of the person

with disabilities. With reference to the encounter between the two that I have been discussing in terms of the gaze and its relationship to, particularly visual, stigma, it is useful to share Anne Finger's strikingly imagined—though poignantly and accurately detailed—encounter between Rosa Luxemburg and Antonio Gramsci, each a person with disabilities. Although one person, Rosa, in this instance has the power of the gaze, it is one she doesn't normally have the privilege of experiencing:

We can measure Rosa's startled reaction as she glimpses him the misshapen dwarf limping towards her in a second-hand black suit so worn that the cuffs are frayed and the fabric is turning green with age, her eye immediately drawn to this disruption of the visual field; the unconscious flinch; the realization that she is staring at him, and the too-rapid turning away of the head. And then, the moment after, the consciousness that the quick aversion of the gaze was as much of an insult as the stare, so she turns her head back but tries to make her focus general, not a sharp gape. Comrade Rosa, would you have felt a slight flicker of embarrassment? shame? revulsion? dread? Of a feeling that can have no name?

(Finger in Davis, 128)

This concept is associated with the inversion of political power. Disability hence figures as a disruption in the visual and related perceptual fields in its relation to the power of the gaze and, within a society of normalcy, we view the regulation and containment of such outbreaks in the stream of hegemonic continuity (Davis, 128–129). Referring to Freud's *Spaltung*, Davis acknowledges that the cultural propensity to split the body into two unequal categories is very difficult to explain. *Spaltung* relates to a process that occurs within the infant's consciousness involving a conceptual splitting of whole objects into parts—particularly part positive and part negative, so that they appear distinct from the original whole when recombined. This model is commonly extrapolated in an attempt to explain the cleaving process that occurs on a larger, cultural level, including, of course, the splitting of the prototype of *the* body into 'good' and 'bad' bodies (129).

There are numerous factors that can be justifiably attributed to a feasible explanation for this. In a political sense, the disabled or mobility challenged body is particularly challenged in post-industrial societies where productivity is so intimately tied up with the market and western ideals of success. Again, as I have mentioned previously in chapter two, the non-standardized body that cannot complete the levels of work expected of it is invariably framed negatively in terms of its productivity and, on a more implicit basis, its ability to conform to the ideological standards of the prevailing work ethic (130). Davis also shows that the term 'disabled' is an absolute term—one is either 'complete', or 'whole' or disabled, that is, entirely marked in one's *dis-ability*. The term is not gradated to reflect the fact that just because an aspect of a person does not function as most other people's do, the rest of them need not be written off as well (131). Davis constructs an allegory between the tradition of the goddess Venus and the Medusa as her poignant double, to describe the intersection between the 'able/disable' construction of the body. The perfection of Venus' beauty is posited as the opposite of the fragmentation and repulsion associated with the Medusa to create the dialectic between beauty and ugliness, the perfect body and the disabled one—marking the power of the visual at the moment of intersection. At the instant that the normal person looks at the person with a perceived disability, they are turned to stone in their self-conscious rigidity, battling with the desire to look and the inability to comfortably

stare. As the visual field transforms into an overtly problematic space, disability finds power in its abject otherness which maintains the ability to, quite literally, petrify. To counter this, disability must once more be contained and regulated though the introduction of rationality—here symbolized by Athene who, having created Medusa’s monstrosity—a writhing head of snakes and the dubious ability to turn men to stone with one look, finally compels an end to it by ordaining her murder in the form of Perseus (132).

Davis focuses attention on the western representative tradition of the body in art to ameliorate his analysis of the construction of normalcy. He begins by recognizing the powerful institution that has served to cement from early on in the western era of artistic production a preferential means of envisioning the body (132). Kenneth Clark has identified this convention as being most clearly articulated in the female nude. Clarke emphasizes that the nude is not a literal reflection of the human body but rather a set of conventions: “the nude is not the subject of art, but a form of art...the body re-formed” (Clark in Davis, 132). If one accepts this tenet then it is logical to see the nude as a significant contribution to the set of idealized western conventions of the imagining of the body. One needs to consider that the signifier ‘nude’, for the most part is largely tied to the signification of the female body—indeed, Lynda Nead, in a feminist revisioning of Clark, has posited that the female nude connotes ‘Art’ (Nead in Davis, 133).

Davis points out the irony in the fact that out of the plethora of Venus nudes that have survived the ravages of time, from antiquity to the present, practically none have been preserved intact. This irony is exacerbated by the fact that the common headless and armless state in which the nudes are found is usually completely overlooked by art historians—the absence that is not seen is filled with a presence in the form of compensation. Davis maintains that dealing with the nude therefore is not merely a matter for art history but one of the reception of disability—in the sense of the ‘normal’ viewer’s making reparation in order to ‘cope’ in the presence of difference (133). Fear of the fragmented or altered body drives the consistent focus on systemized, complete bodies through a system of regulation that not only completes the nudes of western art but reconfigures the discontinuous unpredictability of the physical body into an illusion of totality (134). Clarke, for example, describes the Esquiline Venus of the fifth century as “solidly desirable, compact, proportionate...her proportions have been calculated on a simple mathematical scale. The unit of measurement is her head...” (Clark in Davis, 134–135). The absurdity in the irony of this description is that the Esquiline Venus has *no* head at all—demonstrating the extreme amnesia and rerouting of the point of attention exhibited by art historians regarding the subject of mutilation of a supposed body of desire (ibid). The impairment—or lack—in the body is, according to Davis, mentally reformed to produce a pristine whole, reconstituting the visual field and “sanitizing the disruption in perception” (135). Ironically nudes reflecting *normal* biological processes such as pregnancy also reflect a history of exclusion from the idealized group of Venuses enjoying the status of purity and completion—fertility goddesses such as the Willendorf Venus are strictly separated as fertility goddesses. This is another extrapolation of the avoidance of the undisciplined body repressed by a similar process to those that are physically mutilated. Although the cause of the damage towards such statues is difficult to trace, there has been a record of the defacement of statues by occupying soldiers during times of war, such as the violent vandalism and destruction meted out upon the Parthenon figures. Davis draws a parallel here between the terrorism of women during war that creates disability, and the mutilated statues reflecting the disabled women of art—the ignorance of which he is particularly critical (136). In the sense that the art critic venerates these statues to a point of secular worship, they form a modern mirror for the original

worshippers of these women, for whom they largely held tremendous spiritual significance. The art critic, however, in order to achieve his vision of the idealized whole, worships not, in fact, the fallible defaced statue in stone, but that which it represents, the essentialized body of Desire, the body of the imagined Other (138) of artistic Perfection.

Davis engages in a concerted scrutiny of the cultural suppression of the image of the incomplete body in all of its chaos and imperfection; in its state as a wound that is never whole and untainted. This body, according to the psychoanalytic theory of Lacan must remain suppressed, albeit this state of hallucination is always threatening to collapse and reveal its primary signification as a deficient reality in defiance of its perfected double. Since this is not the focus of my analysis I do not find it necessary to follow that tangent, though the mechanism itself is consistent with the western social dynamic that cleaves the body into this unseemly polarity. Lacan relates the repulsion and fear associated with disability with the suppression of the primal fragmentariness of the body as it is articulated through Freud's theory of the *Unheimlich*. This can be translated as that which denotes a sense of the uncanny or, to be more literal, the 'unhomely', that is, that which is unfamiliar, uncomfortable and unpredictable—qualifiers that have become synonymous with a description of the socially disabled body. Freud is clear that the *Unheimlich* is not simply something to be feared—rather, the repulsion of the uncanny remains ambivalent—it is both intimately connected to, yet deviates from that which is familiar. Freud forges a direct connection between this concept and disability, citing as *Unheimlich* "dismembered limbs, a severed head, a hand cut off at the wrist" (Freud in Davis, 141). The familiarity of the body part morphs into the uncanny through its severing—the prefix 'un' marks the movement into the 'unhomely' and denotes the mechanism of repression (Davis, 140–142).

It would be difficult to find a context whereby the errant body has been marginalized to a greater degree than in the visual arts. Initially, as I have explored earlier, the idealized form touting perfection dominated as the central motif of the visually imagined body. This was superseded by the standardized body produced through the formulaic emphasis of hegemonic normalcy—both formalizations enforcing the continued residence of the abnormal body in desolate places of secreted silence and invisibility. Existing virtually solely as "symbols of otherness whose non-integration is taken as a given trait of their impairment" (Hevey in Davis, 150), images of disabled people in photographic anthologies remain scarce. They materialized largely in medical journals which 'prove' their condition while the subjects remain disengaged and rigid. They resemble, in their objectification, either an instance of the grotesque—such as those seen in the representations of Diane Arbus—or, in their framing, a likeness to the imperialist depictions of black people in stiff colonial settings. In much the same manner that the bodies of people of colour were intentionally omitted from mainstream media, ordinary bodies of people who experienced disability were consistently absented from general social representation (Davis, 150).

Davis emphasizes the appropriation in both modernist and postmodern contexts of the disabled body as a representation of the grotesque. It was employed by Bakhtin to describe the dominant aesthetic of the middle ages that revelled in the non-idealized form. Bakhtin allied the grotesque, as a concept, with the common people who were aligned with oversized physical features, scatological references and the propensity for inverting power—this eventually usurped by the regularity and order concomitant with humanism and the Renaissance (ibid). Of particular significance to Davis' focus is that whilst the grotesque does maintain this relation to counter-hegemonic notions of proletarian aesthetics and the power to overturn oppressive systems, it

has not succeeded in liberating actual bodies from being labelled as grotesque—and being treated with the associated repugnance and disdain referenced through the contemporary connotations this term implies. This is aptly illustrated through Sontag’s disapprobation of Arbus’s photographs of people with disabilities, claiming that “Arbus’s work shows people who are pathetic, pitiable, as well as repulsive, but it does not arouse any compassionate feelings...do they see themselves, the viewer wonders, like *that*? Do they know how grotesque they are?” (Cited in Hevey in Davis, 151). Stripped of the Bakhtinian correlation which redeems this term from this type of reductive signification, Sontag’s references cement the term with its now commonly associated lexical articulation that finds affinity in the “hideous, monstrous and deformed”—the grotesque and the *grossly* disabled have become practically synonymous as a metaphor for otherness, alterity and abomination. Maintaining ableist cultural values, this disturbance in the visual field only perpetuates disparity and clichéd convention (Davis, 151).

This perpetuation of normativity is consistently prevalent, more than anywhere else in the visual arts, in film—in fact, since the earliest silent films, the depiction of the disabled body has remained a relative obsession from the earliest silent reel films such as *Deaf Mutes’ Ball* (1907) and *The Cripple’s Marriage* (1909) to more recent depictions of disability such as *Coming Home* (1978) and *My Left Foot* (1989) and *Boxing Helena* (1993) (Davis, 151–159; Longmore, 65). Paul Longmore explores the ubiquitous presence of disabled characters in television and film and points out that whilst these presences exist, they are kept at a distance as the problem of the other, the marginal social being whose predicament is either evaded or understated or emphasized as an issue that the normalized individual is not meaningfully concerned with. In short, they remain stigmatized and kept at a non-threatening distance to the prevailing ideologies of, particularly, popular entertainment (Longmore, 65–66).

Disability has a significant history of its association with criminality as filmic representations will verify. Similar to synonymous literary representations—such as Shakespeare’s Richard III and Melville’s Captain Ahab, physical handicaps are aligned with moral dissolution and come to depict vice and evil—one merely has to consider the disabled wreckers of woe, Doctor Strangelove and Doctor No. The hunchback genius of television’s “Wild Wild West” Doctor Loveless, is bent on the overthrow and ultimate destruction of the US government—here the fury-driven cripple’s intention to destroy the enforcement of the normalized majority’s hold over the reins of power is clear (66–67).

Prevailing social prejudices are thereby displayed through the common characterization of disabled people in the form of stigma: disability is a punishment for criminal behaviour; people with impairments are embittered as a consequence and are often obsessed with enraged revenge as they hold a deep-seated resentment towards people defined as able. In reality, non-disabled people are invariably the cause of hurt and violence towards those with disabilities, the statistics of which I have discussed in an earlier chapter on Davis. Longmore shows that, similar to popular portrayals of other minorities, unaccounted for hostile fantasies of the stigmatizer are transferred to those carrying the signification of oppression. The oppressor, in fact, disowns their fear and hatred by blaming the very ones that cause their discomfort, somehow rendering them responsible for their own marginalization (67–68).

Closely related to this type of depiction is that of the disabled person as ‘monster’—this is also prevalent in literature, film and television—the latter providing the most accessible base for viewing these depictions in contemporary times—such as the made-for-television remake of the horror classics, *The*

Hunchback of Notre Dame, *The Phantom of the Opera* and *Beauty and the Beast*. Typically, such depictions exhibit the monster as grossly disfigured physically and these deformities are depicted in such a way that invariably the character is denoted as possessing little morality—evidenced in their deviance from the standards of what it is to be human. Often these monstrous characters display little to no knowledge or practice of self control and are thereby presented, essentially, as threats to the undoing of the social fabric—in essence a danger to society. This might not always be something that is depicted as willfully malevolent, as Lenny displays in *Of Mice and Men*—the threat however, still looms far too closely for comfort and the source of social undoing must eventually be destroyed. Tragic or not, it is depicted as inevitable and necessary to reestablish the basis for social order. The demise of the monster is inevitable even when they seem to pose no overt threat to any individual and even when bigotry is revealed as the primary cause of harm to the person. The severely disabled character in *The Elephant Man* finally takes his own life after finding the pressures and hurt concomitant with living in such an unforgiving society too much to bear (68–70).

The most prevalent image in film and television is that of the maladjusted disabled person, which seems to have developed in the aftermath of World War II in response to the vast amount of veterans with disabilities returning from the conflict. These melodramas of adjustment typically tout a strong social message that disabled people *are* still capable of taking pleasure in the facets of life that non-disabled people enjoy but that this involves a confrontation of self for acceptance and the resultant adjustment to occur. Although these revelations are often initiated through the ‘normal’, the brunt of the amendment lies with the affected person who is expected to take responsibility for their life. Life is often portrayed as a ‘gift’ and its enjoyment relies on the courage and strength of the person to make the best of it (71–72). This in my view, glaringly reflects the capitalist sentiment that weights one’s worth in society and one’s place in life according to one’s achievements which arise from one’s approach to life—for the basis of the ideology is that success and attitude are mutually exclusive. This therefore places responsibility for poverty on the individual, refusing to take a broader social perspective for an acknowledgement of the cultural factors influencing one’s predicament or position in society. Coupled with the Christian-based ideology that presents life as a gift to be cherished, a social incentive is touted that represses expressions of discontent, struggle and objections to the nature of social responsibility. In the same way, struggles with disability remain essentially the fault and the problem of the one who is impaired.

The dominant social function of filmic and televised representations of disability, then, is to isolate the disabled individual as the source of the problem, diverting attention away from issues of social prejudice and discrimination and cementing it is a physical encumbrance that can be overcome through personal feats of triumph. In recent times, there have been some productions that resist such readings, creating a tension between traditional dramas of adjustment and people with disabilities rearticulating their struggle through confrontations of cultural prejudice—these rifts in dominant ideology accompanying growth in media awareness and the disability rights movement. Examples can be found in films such as *The Ordeal of Bill Carney*, a dramatization of a true story of a landmark legal battle in which the quadriplegic Carney fights the legal system in order to gain custody of his sons. Representations such as this fight against the popular conception that disabled people are unable to perform social roles and responsibilities successfully whilst focusing on auxiliary issues such as the right of disabled people to access public places and the possibility of enjoying healthy sexual and romantic relationships, the latter signified through the depiction of Carney’s paraplegic lawyer (Longmore, 73–76). Advertising and television commercials, once also the sole arena of normalized bodies, have now expanded

their scope to include the presence of the disabled body. Massive corporations such as Levi's and McDonald's have recently included images of people with disabilities interacting with normalized bodies. Such advertisements not only represent the possibility that people with and without disabilities can simultaneously enjoy the products whilst interacting in the same social space, they also serve as recognition of the disabled body within once socially exclusionary cultural zones (76–77). These bodies are therefore not deemed so abhorrent that they would be considered financially detrimental to the companies—on the contrary, their inclusion of the once completely marginalized body within popular cultural advertising is an indication that they believe that to continually enforce their absence is to detrimentally exclude this market from their grasp.

In contrast to the long-standing tradition prevalent in the visual arts of avoidance of the disabled body and its complexity of representation, are the works of two notable artists who consciously exploit this institution of circumvention, thereby problematizing the simplistic binary that maintains the divide between whole and imperfect bodies. In these instances of divergence, the normalized gaze is reappropriated, the artists actively defying conventional signification, utilizing the stultification of the tradition from which they emerge as intentionally differentiated. The first artist of resistance is Mary Duffy, a contemporary artist without arms who bridges the divide between conventional representations of the Venus and the Medusa in her work *Cutting the Ties that Bind*. This work consists of a series of photographic plates depicting a process of unveiling the female body as Nude. In the first plate, a figure is portrayed standing draped in white cloth, the fabric completely covering her body. The second plate reveals the artist's body partially unveiled, the drapery covering most of her legs and revealing the artist's torso, without arms. There is a clear association with the Venus de Milo, whose pose and stance the artist is mirroring. The third picture depicts the artist stepping away from the drapery, smiling victoriously. Duffy explains her retaliation towards the oppression of the gaze that she contended with so often in her life and the objectification inhering in this visual device that repeatedly undermined her agency:

By confronting people with my naked body, with its softness, its roundness and its threat I wanted to take control, redress the balance which media representations of disabled women [are] usually tragic, always pathetic. I wanted to hold up a mirror to all those people who had stripped me bare previously...the general public with naked stares, and more especially the medical profession.

(Cited in Nead in Davis, 149)

Duffy redirects the normalized gaze, articulating it as dangerous, remonstrating its violence and her transgression beyond its carceral oppression (148–149).

The photographer Jo Spence has recognized the implicit pose of normalcy inhering in the camera's gaze and the normalized photographic session. In her rearticulation of meaning and the gaze, Spence revises her photography to include the nude model as a person with disabilities. Her many shows and her book *Putting Myself In The Picture: A Political, Personal, and Photographic Autobiography* (1986) centres partly on her mastectomy. Her focus on the participatory gaze that links operative and post-operative processes seeks to explore and understand, not retreat, from bodily changes (Davis, 149). She arbitrates with her body, creating a dialectic between text and photograph that challenges conventional values about the body in defiance of the

traditionalist canons of female beauty. Like Duffy, she is also focused on the medical profession's excessive control over, particularly, women's bodies—contrasting these reductive representations with the imagined body she inhabits as a woman (Spence in Davis, 149). In any work in which the body is represented, the varying representations of physicality remain in dialogue with one another—the normalized body always references the marginalized body; even in its lack existing as that which has been consciously absented and barred from articulating meaning through the oppressive regulation of the visible imaginary. This relationship, of course, represents the social conditions of the Manichean polarity that enforces disparity and the misrepresentation typified within a hegemonic context of dualities. Davis is correct in his contention that whilst the body remains an object that continues to be produced and consumed, normalcy and the hierarchies that accompany it will still be allowed the power to continue policing—and oppressing—the abnormal body (ibid). This is the body that exists as a challenge to the types of ideological mores that prevent the possibility of the reconsideration of meaning outside of the spectacle of containment—the body that, when it remains hidden, perpetuates the suppression of the secrets that would erupt through the surface gloss that ensures the shame behind those ideologies remains buried.

In order to contextualize the visioning of the body, it is necessary to move backwards in time and consider the onset of the visual cultural obsession. As Martin Jay observes, it is often alleged that the modern era is unsurpassed in its focus on the visual—in fact the West has been described as ocularcentric in its privileging of the visual perceptual field. This was, in large measure, initiated in the Renaissance era through the invention of the telescope and the microscope in the scientific disciplines, whereby the precedent that was set was peculiarly “nonreflexive, visual and quantitative” (Jay, 66). Expanding into other realms of society, this assertion supports Rorty's philosophical ‘mirror of nature’ metaphor, Foucault's society of surveillance and Debord's society of the spectacle to support this prevalence of the ubiquity of the visual in the modern era (ibid). Contesting the idea that the modern era is easily summarized as an integrated system of visually oriented theory and practice, Jay contends that modernity in fact is comprised of a differentiation of subcultures that, through investigation, reveal a multiplicity of insights into ways of seeing that previous theorists might have dismissed as a reductive and standardized system. Contrary to Christian Metz's conception of a unified scopic regime of modernity, our recent history is not, as Jacqueline Rose reminds us, “...a petrified block of single visual space” since it can, when looked at askance, reveal itself as a place that compels a “moment of unease” (Rose in Jay, 66). Jay is in fact bold enough to assert that this enhanced understanding is the product of a fundamental reversal in the normalized hierarchy of visual subcultures usually associated with the modern scopic regime (66–67). The focus of my analysis is not to determine a superior scopic regime, since that in itself defeats the possibilities inhering in valid consideration of a multifaceted approach that allows for contrasting methods of visual imagining—more typical of a postmodern attitude. What is of particular import is to underline the colossal impact of Cartesian perspectivalism, which is commonly regarded as the dominant, if not hegemonic visual model of modernity though its identification with Renaissance ideas regarding perspective and the philosophical Cartesianism that vaunts subjective rationality (67). For example, Rorty's widely discussed *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979) exemplifies the propagation that this is *the* regime of the modern era: “in the Cartesian model the intellect inspects entities modeled on retinal images...In Descarte's conception — the one that became the basis for “modern” epistemology — it is *representations* which are in the “mind” (Rorty in Jay, 67). The assumption that this system is *the* reigning visual model of modernity is

commonly linked to the assertion that its success lies in the fact that it most perfectly describes the ‘natural’ experience of sight purveyed by the scientific world view. It was only when the presumed synonymy between nature and science was disputed that the contention towards the totalizing domination of this visual system began (67).

Practically every conceivable aspect of the perspectivalist revolution—the technical, aesthetic, religious and political aspects and beyond, have been thoroughly considered since the first writings on it dating to the Italian Quattrocento. Brunelleschi is traditionally accorded the honour of its invention, with Alberti as its first theoretical interpreter (ibid). Its development can, ironically, be attributed to the far from systemically logical medieval fascination with the metaphysical implications of light as divine *lux* rather than merely the perceived *lumen*—linear perspective thereby representing a marriage between God’s will and mathematical optical regularity. Once the ecumenical foundations of the system were eroded, the positive connotations of this supposedly objective optical regime remained as firmly cemented as the dominant ideology, extrapolated from the objects of religious underpinning to the spatial relations of the canvas—carving space into geometrically isotropic, rectilinear, abstract and uniform proportions. This visual device made it possible to render onto a two-dimensional surface the three-dimensional, rationalized space of perspectival vision and could be extended via Alberti’s metaphor to encompass the imagining of a flat mirror reflecting geometricized space, allegedly radiating out from the viewing eye. Significantly, the eye was depicted as *singular*—as a lone eye that radiated a static fixated gaze, rather than the bifocal gaze later scientists associated with the dynamic movement allowing for the ‘saccadic’ flickering that is associated with moving between a number of focal points (68). This, fixed act of looking became synonymous with the Gaze that was necessarily reduced to a singular point of view in what Bryson has named the ‘Founding Perception of the Cartesian perspectivalist tradition:

The gaze of the painter arrests the flux of phenomena, contemplates the visual field from a vantage-point outside the mobility of duration, in an eternal moment of disclosed presence; while in the moment of viewing, the viewing subject unites his gaze with the Founding Perception, in the moment of perfect recreation of that first epiphany.

(Bryson in Jay, 68)

As I have already discussed with particular reference to Davis, the singularity of the Gaze has been crucially damaging to the marginalized body, the reductive nature of its fixity ensuring the continued invisibility of the negatively determined form. The history of visual culture and artistic representation has been a complicit mirror for the hegemonic, hierarchized society that actively articulates attention away from any body that signifies deviation from the norm—be it the idealized body of the Enlightenment era or the increasingly standardized body of modern and postmodern society. Of additional significance here is the consequence of Cartesianism that has accompanied the dominance of the Gaze in singularly isolating a privileged viewpoint that has consistently served to elevate the stereotype of superiority in western society and culture—Cartesian Rationalism. This grandfather of difference—emerging from a system whose ontology commences from the figure of hierarchized duality, marks the birthing of the binary system that has persistently prevailed in marginalizing and excluding the deviant body of the minority—that is necessarily negatively marked and

oppressed through its difference. This is the body of the criminal, the terrorist, the animal; the body aligned with disability, inferior race, sex, ethnicity, class and religion. The body that does not articulate the perfected illusion that controls and manipulates the hierarchical stream of irregular pairings, which relies on the ideology of sameness to perpetuate, ironically, prejudice based on difference. This binary system of cultural, ethical and physical polarities is birthed from the very same source that initiated the fixated stare of the Gaze. It is at this crossover, located at this colossal confluence, that the foundation and apex of visual and cultural fixity become unified. And here, surely one must conclude that the enormity of the relationship between visibility and culture is demonstrated—in the very gravity of the fact that the junctures that initiate the ontology of their ethe of sameness and difference are in fact one and the same.

Roland Barthes has drawn attention to a suspicion of the image's potential—in terms of its capacity to extend to represent analogical meaning that can form an entirely distinct code—a system of representation unique to itself that can produce complex tropic figures. If we place gravity alongside the fact that, etymologically, 'image' is linked to the Latin root *imitari*, that is, to imitate, then this possibility might be limited from developing its potential as a complex progenitor of meaning, as Barthes outlines: "...we find ourselves immediately at the heart of the most important problem facing the semiology of images: can analogical representation (the 'copy') produce true systems of signs and not merely simple agglutinations of symbols? Is it possible to conceive an analogical 'code'?" (Barthes, 'The Rhetoric of the Image', 70).

Unsurprisingly, linguists are perhaps the most reluctant to accord the status of language to images—not all systems of communication, many would contend, deserve alignment with the entirety and complexity of a phonetic system of communication. General opinion, too, has exhibited a fair amount of mistrust towards the image—viewing it as an area of *resistance* to meaning, which Barthes articulates in terms of a mythologized conception of Life. The image, as re-presentation, is allied with the idea of resurrection, this reenactment seen as contrary to the richness of lived experience. The image is also viewed, alternatively, as incomparably rich, its effusiveness incapable of ever being rendered entirely within the limits of a linguistic system. What becomes relevant to the questions I am asking in this study is not whether or not limits are indicated through image-meaning but, rather, that visibility demands that one renegotiate one's understanding of those limits in a process of unraveling the "veritable ontology of the process of signification" (Barthes, 70). In the process of delving into the way that meaning articulates through the image, one opens up a practice of finding the possibility inhering in the cultural visual imagination. One begins by seeking to find those limits to understand their genesis, so as to move beyond them—to see, in fact, whether the image is capable of transgressing plausible bounds and finding a point once not conceived as possible (ibid).

Rodin compares the gaze of the photographer—and viewer of the photograph—as one that is enslaved to fixity in comparison to the "gradual unfolding of a gesture" that one finds in artistic representations such as sculpture and painting (Rodin in Virilio, 'A Topographical Amnesia', 108). In this sense, Rodin claims that art is more representative of truth than photography, since the latter represents a moment in time that is frozen, a split second that is non-experiential—much like a scientific image. If the artwork, however, manages to convey a moment as it is executed over several seconds, it is closer to the truth of reality which operates in sequence, not through simultaneous movements as the camera suggests. The spectator of a well implemented art piece has, in effect experienced the illusion of having viewed it being performed, its veracity stemming from its lack of absolute precision enabling the spectator to go beyond the "greedy stare...of immediate vision" (Rodin in

Virilio, 108–109). Rodin thus emphasizes the need for the ‘witness’ to complete the work of art as it moves through material time in keeping with the spectator’s experience of temporality. Paul Virilio cites Cicero and associated memory-theorists’ invention of a topographical system in order to enhance natural memory—an imagery-mnemonics based on the Method of Loci. This method involves remembering a sequence of easily recalled locations within a space accessible to the imagination. The material to be remembered is then coded into discrete images and inserted in the correct order into the various loci. Virilio points to this system in relation to his discussion of seeing—whereby he correlates the act of seeing with the creation of thought—and memory—when occurring diachronically (Virilio, 110). Remembering, then, is a significant mode of thinking and, in turn, directly related to sight and the act of looking and bearing witness to. I believe he is drawing attention to the topographical system to emphasize the importance of acts of seeing and expressing the visual imagination for the simple and necessary utilizations of the mind to *create* articulations of thought. Thought is based in memory—on what one has experienced and is able to recall—and memory is a powerful device, both individually and in the creation of the cultural imaginary.

From the onset of their arrival, Virilio outlines the massive impact optical devices have had on the manner in which topographical memories were stored and retrieved. A plethora of instruments have emerged over the centuries designed to enhance the act of seeing, ranging from Al-Hasan ibn al-Haitam aka Alhazen’s camera obscura of the tenth century to Roger Bacon’s instruments and the increasing number of visual prostheses such as astronomic telescopes associated with the Renaissance era. Virilio ironically remarks that concomitant with the development of these devices to see increasingly further into the once unseen universe, was the realization that a world beyond reach inhabited the outer spheres—this understanding prevailing with the truths shown through the epitome of the visual prosthesis, the telescope. Accompanying the images of the remote heavenly bodies and planets was the substantial overhaul in perception resulting from an obliteration of previously unknown ideas about distance and dimension (Virilio, 111). The awe and inspiration emanating from these realms of possibility was produced, once again, through the act of seeing and the perceptions achieved through the newly discovered realms of the gaze. Vast rewriting of knowledge and meaning occurred as the realm of visual discovery continued to open up through these acts of explorationⁱⁱ.

The Renaissance as it is largely represented today, appears as a breakaway period whereby apparatuses such as the telescope served to shatter previous conceptions of geography, reinscribing previously held knowledges and belief systems. Furthermore, various instruments were utilized to mislead the senses by artists who had come into contact with these new technologies—such as Holbein, a contemporary of Copernicus, whose iconography operated as a system of deception for the senses. Mechanistic optical devices, including mirrors and glass tubes, were required in order for the viewer to gain a complete perception of the finished work. What Virilio terms the ‘reality-effect’—the representation of reality in the eyes of the viewer, was dissociated, and mediated through a puzzle of light and prosthetics (ibid).

The battlefield is another area where the dynamics of representation underwent a metamorphosis from antiquity to the present day. As Virilio shows, the tactical necessities of military conquest required the acceleration of reading time, privileging the visual space of the trooper to provide rapid stimuli in the form of slogans and other logotypes of war. The battlefield marks an area where social intercourse is at best intermittent, if present at all—conciliation is rare and terror inculcated. Orders are rapidly fired between detonations and signal flags, symbols and schematic emblems provide a delocalized visual language that is

grasped rapidly through brief glances. Lazare Carnot, organizer of the French revolutionary armies, reported that the speed of transmission of military intelligence lay at the heart of the nation's political and social structures, terror holding equal sway behind the lines and at the front. The advent of instantaneous photography and the invention of the electric telegraph marked the onset of the telescoping of messages, already reduced to a few elementary signs, to the speed of light. Transtextuality and transvisuality continued to compete for recognition of the latest advances until the ubiquitous emergence of the audio-visual blend. Interestingly, Virilio remarks that the advent of the simultaneity of television and tele-diction undermined the problematic of isolating the site where mental images are formed and consolidated as part of the process of natural memory making. These colossal leaps in technological advancement led physicist Ernst Mach to remark on the breakdown of previously separated spaces: "The boundaries between things are disappearing, the subject and the world are no longer separate, time seems to stand still" (Mach in Virilio, 112). It is war, Virilio reiterates, that remains intimately connected to this teleological phenomenon—war usually precluded from associations between the subject and their world through the abolition of space—in its anticipation of human movement and, I would add, agency (Virilio, 112–113).

Through the emergence of a proliferation of visual and audiovisual prostheses and widespread use of instantaneous transmission equipment, a marked increase in the encoding of mental images has resulted—accompanied by an attendant rapid disintegration of mnemonic recall. This follows Virilio's argument that seeing and spatio-temporal placement are largely viewed as existing prior to gesture and the vocalization of language (113) as a layer of representation integral and therefore closer to the ontology of thought. Despite, therefore, the abundance of audiovisual aids, Virilio contends that "we get no closer to the *productive unconscious of sight*, something the surrealists once dreamed of in relation to photography and cinema" (113). Instead he argues, we are taken only as far as its *unconsciousness* to a future amplitude more difficult to visualize. The imagination suffers under the duress of a profusion of technology, as does the experience of life—if we recall Rodin—in real time. Virilio aligns the death of art, which was heralded from the beginning of the nineteenth century—as a symptom of this larger process that displays an unprecedented crisis of representation whereby the act of seeing has been replaced by a "regressive perception" that is removed from the very substrate of the real (Virilio, 114). The process of storing memories exemplified in the topographical system is nulled through instantaneous storage technologies, the effect of which is marked well by the performer Laurie Anderson who declares herself as a "mere voyeur interested only in details" who in order to remember uses computers "tragically unable to forget, like endless rubbish dumps" (Anderson in Virilio, 114). Virilio disparages the widespread evidence of what he terms visual dyslexia and illiteracy—a struggle or inability to understand and process and significantly, re-present the cultural images which were originally utilized by silent-filmmakers and advertisers and the like to replace the ubiquity of logos—the Word. This is the effect of a cultural topographical amnesia, the latter term deriving from a group of neuropathologists who used it to describe a psychotropic disorder otherwise termed *incomplete awakening* or *Elpenor Syndrome* and who related it to Jack London's reference to Londoners of the early 1900's as people of the abyss" (London in Virilio, 116). This reference denoted the vast throngs of social defectors—the homeless—who represented ten per cent of the population, for whom the ubiquity of urban lighting had become little other than torturous. There emerged a phenomenon of zombie-like sleepwalkers who were unable to find respite from waking at night since breaking the law now became far less possible under the bedazzlement of urban luminosity, whilst the day offered

alternatives not yet conceived of by police. This, he argues, is mirrored in much of the architecture of large cities which allow one to feel dislocated—as if one is nowhere, a place that, in fact, could be anywhere—a largely functionalist aesthetic is construed which leads to a banality of form in its fixity. The homogeneity of form that exemplifies this constructivist aesthetic is doubtless intimately tied once again to supplement and buffer the language and ideology of war whereby visuality is reduced only to that which is germane for the dexterous exercising of a representative transmission homogenous, functional and propagandistic. This is well illustrated through the words of Albert Speer, Hitler’s architect, who utilized the beams of 150 anti-aircraft searchlights to create a rectangle of light in the sky to entertain Nazi militants at a party rally in Nuremburg in 1935: “I now feel strangely moved that the most successful architectural creation of my life was a chimera, an immaterial mirage” (Speer in Virilio, 116).

The exercise in the creation and development of propaganda and the concomitant impact on visuality is rooted once again, in transmission: *propaganda fide* translates to the ‘propagation of faith’. Accompanying the deportation of millions of soldiers to the battlefields in 1914 and the deregulation of perception Virilio has discussed, was the diasporic moment of panic witnessed in millions of Americans and Europeans when lack of faith in the act of seeing was initiated. Humanity’s faith in perception (Merleau-Ponty in Virilio, 118) underwent a shattering of belief as the cultural viewpoint became enslaved to the technical sightline, reducing the visual field to a sighting device (Virilio, 118). The normalized gaze became policed through detection technics, occurring in instantaneous sections that rigidified the gaze into the witnessing of a series of moments, morphing the act of seeing into a passage from vision to visualization. Significantly, this contributed enormously to a standardization of ways of seeing and a dependence on the myopia of the lens—and a resultant acceptance of the process of visual conditioning (Virilio, 118). From the beginning of the 19th century, the proliferation of reified images and signs in the perceptual field became an accepted norm and should not simply be explained in terms of the ease of their technological reproducibility (118)—these images in fact operate as signifiers of an increasingly homogenized society reduced to a standardized way of seeing through the systems of message transmission intensification I have explored. Rather than viewing them solely as the effects of industry, it is unwise to ignore their role in the transmission, prevalence and intensification of ideologies of war, power and corruption.

In keeping with Virilio’s emphasis on the increasing limitations and fixity of the visual field and the impact on memory is Nicholas Mirzoeff’s analysis of the images that emerged from the second Gulf War: “...more images were created to less effect than at any other period in human history...what was in retrospect remarkable about this mass of material was the lack of any truly memorable images. For all the constant circulation of images, there was nothing to see” (Mirzoeff, 67). He attributes their relative anonymity to media saturation, the genesis and development of which I have discussed with reference to Virilio and earmarks the war as the point of emergence of the banality of images—something Virilio would contend can be traced back to a far earlier date, when data initially was reduced and encoded for transmission purposes. Jean Baudrillard, known for his prophetic work on the dominance of the virtual, strengthens the argument that we are, more than ever before, paralyzed in action by the virtual takeover prevailing in the current western preoccupation with the media and its attendant construction of the nature of the war in Iraq:

We are all hostages of media intoxication, induced to believe in the war just as we were once led to believe in the revolution in Romania, and confined to the simulacrum of war as though confined to quarters. We are all strategic hostages *in situ*; our site is the screen on which we are virtually bombarded day by day, even while serving as exchange value.

(Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, 25)

Mirzoeff associates the jaded reruns of film clips of the war that were broadcast continuously on networks throughout the western world with average quality Hollywood war films such as *Top Gun* (1986) and *Saving Private Ryan* (1998)—both incorporating events of which the war footage represented *copies*. *Top Gun* presented the destruction of iconic statues—a practice which dates back to the 1700's, which was repeated as an overtly staged spectacle when Saddam Hussein's statue toppled down (67–68), complete with the imperialist signature of the US flag over its concrete head. Private Jessica Lynch, who woke up in an Iraqi hospital after her vehicle crashed and was willingly released to her taskforce, was rewritten into the popular media as a hero who, through her bravery and determination, fought and overcame her captivity at the hands of the enemy (68). After she returned to the USA she even helped direct a made-for-the-television film about this fictitious account based on the propagandistic ideologies of the invading nation: *Saving Jessica Lynch* (2003) (*Saving Jessica Lynch*, 1st June 2010). Mirzoeff is correct in pointing out that in contrast to this morass is the glaring absence of dramatic, striking images such as those sights that shocked the world from the Second World War and the War on Vietnam (68). Inaccessible, too, were images of the wounded and terrified civilians, the supposed necessary casualties of war whereby Bush refused liability, dismissing these atrocities as the necessary side effects in a war against terror—the irony need not be spelled out. I would contend, in fact, that the plethora of banality is inversely proportional to the scarcity of images facing the actual crimes of war against the innocent civilians. Mirzoeff points out that another vital aspect of the new mode of globalization that is exemplified in these tired images of war is the fact that so little debate has surrounded the status and affect of these images and he attributes this to the common phenomenon that audiences are groomed to take it for granted that digital media is alterable and more often than not, has been manipulated. He argues that it is commonly construed that a visual image is a distortion of reality and the lack of panic over images emerges from this conditioning which results, primarily, from the provision of a comfortable distance being self-consciously maintained between images and the body of the spectator (69). Mirzoeff refers to the widespread phenomenon of the contemporary western era, the heavily commodified image and aligns this with the theory of Guy Debord who argued that modern life has come to such a point of spectacle that it has eliminated all sense of history—what Virilio would term a cultural topographical amnesia. The bases of Debord's ideas derive from Marx who wrote that capital, in industrial societies, ceases to operate as currency but rather as an abstract value that seeks to perpetuate itself through growth. In fact, Debord argued that the next step in this abstraction process involved the evolution into an image, divorced entirely from the process of production. McDonald's Golden arches logo is an excellent example of this type of image (70) precisely in the way that it connotes far more than it was originally designed to denote—speaking to and forming new dialogues about the political and financial infrastructure of a nation—the USA and a group of nations sharing similar ideologies—the First World West. Its overpowering message is one of change, opportunity and development in a post-modern globalized world, yet it still manages to uphold

traditional American values that paint a utopia of togetherness, sharing and equity. This in turn, does make this multifaceted image a target for parodic inversion—what Debord described as an interruption of the spectacle this image creates—a *détournement*, or diversion. This is often undertaken by individuals and groups of artists and activists who defy the normativity of the status quo that would otherwise prevail unsullied via these image giantsⁱⁱⁱ (71).

Why then, questions Mirzoeff, did the images emerging from the second Gulf War remain so persistently uncontroversial? One major contributing factor he attributes to this phenomenon of banality is the phenomenon of largely internet-based self-styled corporate sabotage such as that of RTMark.com. The self-conscious irony displayed in these parodic ventures mirrors global business strategies through the creation of websites that rearticulate information received from corporations and politicians, portraying them unfavourably through farcical share-selling and advertising. The form of satire they employ does not offer any direct indication that they are not official sites through their exact emulation of the ideology and design of their targets—their commentary existing in subtle and intelligent intertextual subversion. Whilst these campaigns have historically caused much uproar—evidenced, for example in the RTMark.com site launched during the 2000 Bush election campaign, which the latter labelled “an abuse of freedom” (Mirzoeff, 72)—this type of satire is progressively failing to achieve its desired effect. The primary reason for this is that these spoofs are increasingly being taken at face value, resulting in the once powerful potential of postmodern irony floundering (ibid) as, I would argue, consequently resurgent conservative values absorb that irony into the ideology of the mainstream. Consequently, satirical images once abhorred by those targeted at the expense of their success are appropriated and utilized for the development of capital and the furthering of political agendas. A telling example of this was witnessed at Bush’s glorying in the wartime cartoon depictions of himself as a power hungry cowboy who rose to the challenges he was faced with due to his old-fashioned down to earth courage and simplicity (ibid).

Mirzoeff warns of a new development in the cultural appropriation of the images of postmodernity. He traces the movement of capital to its reified status as an image capable of multiple depths of signification, through a further mutation as smart weapon. Mandel has argued that the armaments economy actively intervenes to prevent the predicted crises in capitalism resulting from the inevitable decline in profit as an effect of industrial production. This is based on Marx’s argument for the demise of capitalism due to increasingly efficient production costs emerging as an effect of cheaper manufacturing costs, lowering the cost of production and the market value of products. Mandel has argued that the armaments industry continues to disrupt this process, adding further dynamics to the process of technological change. Echoing critics such as Virilio, he asserts that the intense pace of change indicated through rapidly expanding visual technologies—in collaboration with military research—serve to create an increasingly militarized image (73). The recent images of war, when seen in this light, reveal themselves as carefully manipulated tools designed to maintain capitalism and the seats of the significant players of power. A key element of this cunning is to produce an effect whose mastermind remains invisible so that no single individual can be held accountable (ibid)—this phenomenon has been widely recognized as an outstanding feature of globalization, whereby consequences are effected without a recognizable and tangible agent. Mirzoeff recognizes this eclipse in signification when he describes the convergence of the medium—the image—and the message—the power and authority of war (ibid).

The image of war as it operates in this manner has a very different effect on its desired audiences, of which there are two main factions—the enemy or terrorist, that is, the ultimate ‘opposite’ other and the nationalist/nation supposedly being protected and allowed continued freedom by the government from which the images emerge. The screens upon which these images are designed to be construed, are, as Mirzoeff shows, the large screen ‘theatre’ TV’s of American suburbia, designed to contextualize the images which they feature as benign. The intended affective reception designated for the opponent of war, however, is that of unspeakable disempowerment and awe at the veracity of the strength of the dominant, unconquerable power (74). Since the meaning of the signification of these images is contingent upon the context in which it is viewed, the viewing conditions remain all important since to remove them is to disperse the image’s meaning away from itself (*ibid*), from the context that it is designed to function within. This however, does not destroy its overall power (*ibid*) but does, at least displace the familiarity of its normal functioning. The war camera, in fact, reflects a very similar version of reality to that of popular US middle-class soap operas. Conflict depicting real suffering and death in Iraq, effectively, took place out of shot whilst the 4WD American combat truck, the HUMVEE quickly became a recognizably familiar image—the viewing platform itself was built around the ‘benign’ presence of the American Military emulating at times the format of reality television, these aspects contributing to its credibility (75). The spectacular nature of the bombings, it has also been argued, demonstrated the might of the US army and served as a message of affront to the likes of the United Nations who had placed prohibition warnings on their invasive attack. Of course, when the average viewer spectates the images on the screen, they are not contemplating their own propensity for absorbing propaganda. Like Virilio, Mirzoeff associates the loss of remembrance associated with the development of an image to a tool of war—something that in this globalized world is increasingly common as it literally “traffics in images” (76). This he illustrates with reference to the ongoing refusal by the Iraqi’s to watch the US official television station Iraqi Media Network after the war had ended, claiming it to be churning out the same propaganda the USA used as tools of invasion—despite the occupier’s common claim that it existed as a valid reflection of newly found freedom.

As opposed to the commercial image which initiates debate and dialogue, the war image functions most effectively when it is unquestionably accepted. This is well illustrated in the words of J. L. Austin who describes the war image as a performative event that does what it professes to—it performs the American victory as an image and thus completes it, being sanctioned both by the vendor and the viewer through identification, or lack thereof (Austin in Mirzoeff, 77). It behaves as a tool of patriotic placement and reconfigures individuals relative to its signification in a war of global culture. In order to discredit the war image, Mirzoeff states that one is required to discredit the government from which it was issued—this too was observed when the US government allowed the Iraqi Minister of information to continue to broadcast during the war—to make a mockery of the Iraqi government in its defiance against that which was crumbling around it, that which could be viewed on the screens of the invading power (77).

American defectors unsupportive of the war turned to alternative publications in an attempt to extricate themselves from the propaganda surrounding them. I can only reflect with intense irony on the fact that many of these ‘radicals’ turned to the BBC for less biased coverage—the latter had, in turn, been labelled the Baghdad Broadcasting Corporation through British commentators disgusted at its level of prejudice. This is hardly surprising since it is commonly acknowledged that the war was a joint effort between Britain and the United States—one, I would argue, that placed America on the centre stage as the primary antagonizing power, all the

while bolstered through the barely masked, unbending support of the Blair government administration who stood to gain equally from such on an invasion—both politically and financially. After the war, a more outspoken BBC journalist Mark Damazer boldly criticized the network for its extensive sanitization of the significant death and destruction that other networks had refused to censor and his analysis included an extensive report illustrating its largely pro-coalition viewpoint (78). Whilst it was common practice of major broadcasters to sanitize the war image and prohibit the representation of death on western television screens, it was still possible to seek out the truth of the degree of destruction on alternative media sites, including the internet. In some cases prolonged exposure to these images led to what Mirzoeff termed a war psychosis, resulting often in one of two polarized behaviours; either complete withdrawal from news media or a consuming compulsion to keep abreast of the breaking news and sources of information that displayed less prejudice than the mainstream media, leading to a sense of despair^{iv}. This cannot be attributed merely to the outcome of the war which remained inevitable from the moment of invasion but to our identification with those governments that deploy such power. In short I would argue that the sense of complicity that washes over one when viewing atrocity exacted within the culture one is implicated within, is almost impossible to avoid unless one is entirely emotionally divorced from a socially empathic response. Mirzoeff attributes this numbness to a connection with the individual's view of the notion of 'civilization' and the sense of one's relation to this notion. Mirzoeff is correct to problematize the notion of civility within a postmodern society, relabelling the contemporary identification with equality and fairness not as an effect of a civilized nation, but rather that of a cosmopolitical view (80–82). The latter is located in close proximity to notions of ethical equality and respect for difference without carrying with it the overwhelmingly negative connotations of imperialism and colonization usually association with 'civilization'—and its concomitant binaries of separatism that maintain the polarity of self/other, further emphasizing those that dwell in marginal spaces.

Images of the uncanny prevailed in the Gulf War and that of Saddam Hussein was particularly widespread. From the onset of the war ran the narrative highlighting the victorious goal America sought through his assassination, and emerging from this fervour were a plethora of logical inconsistencies that remained understated to the point of disappearance. This was most clearly evidenced through the ongoing 'discovery' of multiple copies of Saddam—at each instance utilized to strengthen support for the war whereby his imminent capture reactivated viewer engagement to inspire further feverish patriotism. The fact that there was little to no dialogue over the absurdity of these false claims of discovery proves once more Virilio's topographical amnesia, here manifesting on a grand scale throughout the West. The emergence of repeated mistakes, confusion and the revelation of carefully constructed façades did little to unsettle the spectator of war despite the blatant inauthenticity of material transmitted (83–86). The body of Saddam operated on a particularly heightened level of the uncanny for the American spectator, symbolizing, according to Mirzoeff, the monster villain who must be vanquished in order for peace and justice to be restored—a perfect recipe for the Hollywood style scripting of the war (87). Since the 'real' Saddam consistently eluded capture, the US Marine Corps constructed a carefully controlled media event whereby a statue resembling a close likeness to him was toppled as part of a live to air news coverage. In an act of blatant imperialism, the US flag was wrapped around its head as it was decapitated from the statue's monumental tank-driven collapse and it was hastily replaced by an Iraqi flag in a moment of afterthought. By the time Saddam was in fact captured there was a notable anticlimax—unkempt and exhausted, dressed in a medical gown, he resembled a fragile subject of Foucaultian

biopower. Soon after his demise, rumours began leaking out that he had in fact been captured by Kurds and released to the United States to claim their long sought-after prize. It is through this continual circulation of media transmission—where visibility exists in constant dialogue with the varying constructions of the truth—that Saddam’s body, that extreme signifier of the Orientalized foe, retains its sense of the uncanny long after its physicality has been removed (88–89).

The motif of eternal return, articulated through Nietzsche and Benjamin and seen in Freud as the lingering uncanny is a theme Mirzoeff explores in relation the West and its relationship with the East—involving a disturbing, infinite sense of the habitual and inevitable return to the past. Since the West is particularly fond of resolution it exists as an ugly spectre that undercuts narratives of completion, particularly those of progress and triumph: “Eternal return, then, is the constantly feared antithesis to the American narrative that is still grounded in nineteenth-century notions of progressive history” (Mirzoeff, 98). The United States exhibits a particular fixation for this type of banality, blending sentiment, patriotism, ethics and mainstream religion into a fictitious tool of which visibility is a primary factor. This, too, serves as a motif for my work since a matrix of threads are woven throughout the web of issues and ideas that are acknowledged and problematized, in order to rearticulate meaning in a continued stream of instantiation. This multiplying of meaning allows for the potential for greater possibility to be forged, thereby avoiding a regression into platitudes and banality. Each articulation of meaning belongs to an individual subjectivity which also breaks with the stronghold of ideological convention—these unique vantage points are then able to re-imagine global acts of containment and control of the body^v.

Integral to the process of re-imagining the banal image is to seek out alternative ways of seeing, and Mirzoeff suggests adopting a sideways glance that allows us to look around images as opaque as the weaponized clichés of the West. Benjamin considered thinking through the problem of eternal return in everyday life through reference to the tragic revolutionary Auguste Blanqui who ended his life in prison completing the book *L’éternité par les asters* (*Eternity via the Stars*). Blanqui was contemplating the possibility that all of his potential, his might-have-beens, co-exist in multiple worlds beyond his reach (115). I too encourage the imagining of possible worlds, where there exists no limit on the potential for articulating an alternative dynamic that promotes the growth of meaning in a concerted deviation from the confines of normativity and the power of containment. These worlds are not the might-have-beens but, rather, comprise the still-to-be. All that is required is the courage to look sideways and beyond the coaxing complicity of the reductive norm.

Stanley Cohen conceives of and outlines three primary ways in which torture can be visualized. The first is to examine the history of the deed—of those forms of human violence that fall within the realm of ‘torture’. The second entails a history of the oscillation of the scale of admonishment and praise of torture as a form of governance, that is, it focuses on the regulation of torture. The third and fundamental aspect of torture is that of its rhetoric: to focus on the words that comprise the extension of the ideologies espoused to justify the acts of torture. Until recent times torture was not a subject casually discussed at the dinner table—its long-lasting anathema directly related to a general distaste for a subject that most considered irrelevant to their personal lives, and its relative media obscurity allowed such blinkered responses to hold fast. As Cohen rightly outlines, it is only in the aftermath of September 11 and the associated onset of the Global War on Terror that renewed focus has been placed on the practices of torture and he isolates two outstanding features (Cohen, 24–25).

The first element, which is directly related to earlier discussions of the banal image and the current extensive reliance on audio-visual material, is the degree of media saturation that predominates in current debates over torture. The sheer amount of time and space devoted to news items, talk shows and documentaries about torture is unrivalled in the history of the subject, at least in the modern world—and led Jim Murphy, executive producer of CBS *Evening News* to speculate over its predominance in the family unit: “It’s like the conversation you or I would have at dinner: I wonder if we should torture?” (Murphy in Cohen, 25). Media saturation demands a rise in the scope of the pictorial image and references to “hooding...withdrawal of painkillers...beating and shaking...sleep deprivation...harsh lights...loud noise...sensory deprivation...position abuse” (26) emerged veiled under the euphemism of “appropriate pressure”—that is, that still exacted within a reasonable and democratic constitution. Such avoidance is well illustrated through the term ‘torture lite’, an agency phrase invented by a US intelligence officer (ibid). The intentionally reduced emphasis married to the corporate global signification imbues this term with rather grotesque articulation, especially when considered retrospectively in full knowledge of the degree of torture some people have undeniably endured whilst the ordinary man sips his Coke in front of the evening news.

The second element of the current cultural attitude to torture Cohen describes as ethical populism and indicates the phenomenon of the spread and popularization of libero-legal justifications for torture—this of course is directly connected with dissemination of information through the media and advocates the use of some torture methods in the name of security and freedom and justice—once more torture has become an issue that is in existence in public consciousness, and seemingly justifiably so (26).

Cohen shows how, in a short time, the public’s attitude to Abu-Ghraib has altered markedly. The first position was marked by tolerance—acknowledging the use of torture and discarding public responsibility in favour of the decision making processes of the security services. It was realized, however, that this approach leaves governments open to charges of fascism—leading to the second approach which is flat denial of torture *despite* evidence to the contrary. This is the hypocritical approach that naively believes that the law conscientiously observes that which is banned. The third and current approach allows interrogation to be regulated and supervised by judicial bureaucrats. This is the approach that claims a need for torture in some circumstances whereby its practice is authorized by law—a seeming exception to a general prohibition (27)—one can see how this legal detour perfectly wrangles the visible so as to allow the shame of the unseen spectacle to continue without remonstrance in a façade of visibility that only serves to further alienate the tortured prisoner from a simple escape. The law can no longer be trusted for protection, especially when superpowers such as the United States flout international law as easily as they begin a war.

It is only logical then, that the emergence of the images from Abu Ghraib caused such shock and surprise—this is strictly censored viewing that somehow eluded the carceral walls the former usually remains walled strictly within. The sheer revulsion that stirred in the public was tangible at the extreme nature of this spectacle—hooded, manacled, naked men piled into pyramids, men on leashes, forced to perform sexual acts in a cell whilst military dogs waited, straining to attack—and the obsessive recordings that seemed innumerable. It can only be described as gratuitous cruelty, a shameful spectacle that did not occur as an isolated incident but formed a theme of violent and brutal inhumanity. Since then, numerous investigations have revealed that these acts were planned for in a programme of immense humiliation, actioned by Rumsfeld and the CIA to intimidate detainees to inform on one another. They did make pains to cover their tracks but tardiness caught them out—

and once again the medium that brought the truth to the western public was the image, in the form of multiple videos shot on location by military staff using their own camcorders, which were leaked to the media (27–28).

If one were to search for something more disturbing than the displays of tortures themselves, one could argue that the blatant lack of accountability displayed by the US military would deserve that place. Rumsfeld's refusal to engage with the moral issues surrounding the prison conditions, detention practice and cruelty of the torture exemplified this complete separation from affect, these men might as well be extensions of the killing machines and torture devices they operate: "I have not seen the pictures but bad things happen in wars. I don't have to apologise for the conduct of my men" (Rumsfeld in Cohen, 29).

Joanna Bourke, too, describes the shock that swept the West when the photographs that emerged from Abu Ghraib were publicized over the front pages of the newspapers in a form of 'meta war' that avoids the traditions of international law. In interesting contrast to Cohen's account of the lack of accountability on the part of the United States military, Bourke argues that the viewer cannot escape their complicity in these acts as we are more often than not compelled to meet their gaze as they pose for the camera in front of the spectacle of cruelty they have constructed. Interestingly enough, commentators on these atrocities often showed more interest in the perpetrators, not those that were the objects of the gaze. These photographs directed vision in such a way that one was compelled into the act of looking as conquest whilst a doubled silence (Bourke, 39) was imposed upon the tortured prisoners—who were both unable to speak out against atrocity and recorded on camera for further reruns of their trauma. Shockingly, one is able to imagine a lead-up to the scenes we witness, but significantly, time seems to have ended after the shot that was captured—who knows, or recorded, for that matter, the fate of these detainees (ibid). Of them we have no memory.

Bourke also draws attention to the fact that the disturbing nature of these photographs is emphasized by their familiarity with earlier motifs of the spectacle of oppression and atrocity. Albums dating back to the slave era of the American south depicted naked African slaves on auction boxes awaiting sale and lynched Black Americans amidst a bemused white crowd. Both the World Wars left a legacy of photographs representing British and American troops posing triumphantly beside their slain enemies and the Vietnam War is known for its abundance of photographs recording horrific abominations of cruelty meted out by the troops, their plenitude attributable to the proliferation of cheap mass-produced cameras produced at that time (39–40). Much like the deferral demonstrated through Rumsfeld's apathy regarding the actions of the troops committing torturous acts in Abu Ghraib, the perpetrators of war crimes during the Vietnam era were also offered protection against the otherwise intolerable crime of massacring unresisting innocents—blatantly captured through the iconographic photographic images produced—under the guise that they too were acting under authority and therefore beyond reprehension (40–41). Any temptation to dismiss the behaviour of soldiers as an extreme isolated to the context of the military and the pressure of a wartime context should be dismissed, since complicity cannot be bypassed by the individual who consistently maintains their distance in this culture of ethical avoidance. This is demonstrated through studies such as the one undertaken by Stanley Milgram which demonstrated how easy it was to persuade people to cause severe pain in others if ordered to do so by a figure of authority. In fact most people in these studies have no doubt that they would follow such commands without hesitation (41). In the same way, whilst those orchestrating the atrocities in Abu Ghraib stood and posed in nonchalant pleasure, the photographer casually recorded the scene in timely detail—the viewing eye of the lens is implicated as deeply in these spectacles of complicity.

Bourke explains the dehumanization process that occurs in the language of photography that represent the enemies' bodies as trophies—by classifying them as inhuman, they all become fair game. The common thread that binds these actions is the blanketed stripping away of humanity. The Guantanamo Bay shots became recognizable by the black masks and hoods the prisoners were forced to wear, these obscuring their identities. Numerous shots decapitated their heads, further emphasizing their expendable interchangeability. In contrast, the Abu Ghraib images were particularly pornographic in nature. Prisoners were naked, often stacked together in haphazard pyramids with their genitals displayed and sometimes forced to simulate masturbation and fellatio. These photographs emerge as more than representations of torture, for they operated as technologies of torture, used to terrorize further suspects as to their possible fate—a pornographic equivalent of the ritualized atrocities carried out during the World and Vietnam wars, which were recognized by the decapitated heads soldiers placed at the entrance to their tents and aboard their tanks. As souvenirs, these photographic mementos lent significant power to the perpetrators—this often acknowledged by the individuals involved (42).

They also operate to signify the identity transition of the civilian who is expected at least to accord strangers with some degree of respect, to that of a killer who bore no conscience over the calculated violation and murder of others. The carefully staged shots emphasize the power and triumph of the perpetrator as we are directed to see the scene through their eyes through these careful re-enactments that speak of a community bound by shared violence—these rites serve, in fact to cement ties and develop comradeship. Mikhail Bakhtin labelled this variety of ritualized behaviour “authorized transgression” whereby military officials turn a blind eye to events they are officially meant to disapprove of to allow for “effective performance in hostile environments” (Bakhtin in Bourke, 43).

Accompanying the prevalence of sex as a novel element of the recent photographic war trophy is the presence of the female as violator and perpetrator of violence to the male captive—of which there has been little to no history—masculine power having featured throughout the representations of previous wars. Elaine Scarry has gone as far as to say that the images representing Lyndie England wielding her power trump any male equivalents since her sexual abuse occurs without the need of a penis to “convert the other person’s pain into [her] own power...exclusively from the non-vulnerable end of the weapon” (Scarry in Bourke, 44)—the male organ still bearing some correlation to the potential for vulnerability and damage.

Bourke asks a problematic and potentially damning question regarding the general reaction of the public to the photographs of the atrocities, in particular, those of Abu Ghraib—that is, the undeniable excitement that was conveniently masked through fiery diatribes condemning the cruelties emerging from United States culture. Do they, she asks, create an impact at least partially from some macabre titillation at their sheer horror? For most viewers, this lack of empathy would surely entail a distancing process from the spectacle of pain in order to view the photographs aesthetically. She counters this cultural restriction by asserting the predator’s body within society as a site fierce and fluid to maintain more possibility in its articulation than merely representing violence. Her argument is cemented in the fact that this body asserts itself within a space that can be accessed and contested, where power, once freed of the carceral walls, becomes a spectacle whose secret demands telling.

In anticipation of the imminent analysis of the performative aspect of my work, whereby I seek the means to reweave the Spectacle at the complicit nexus where spectator and shame overlap, I conclude this visual exploration of the culturally marked and subjugated body with contemporaneous reference to the human-animal

divide. This particular point in the ideological matrix of binaries is an interesting one, for it marks a node in the cultural sphere where the dualities that inform my analysis meet. The focus here is the tension between the experimental body, the body of the activist who speaks against this form of torture and the consequent intermediary scientific rhetoric of dominant power relations. Within this set of relations the divide is blurred and problematized between animal and human, criminal/terrorist and hero/philanthropist, disability and normativity—amongst a plethora of further simply coded polarities. The highly charged politics that emerge from the extreme practices that inform this particular hierarchy create a complex vortex whereby seeming simplistic opposites are challenged.

Philip Armstrong observes that the radical social action that accompanies confrontation over animal experimentation and abuse, although tending to draw upon rhetorical markers established during groundbreaking historical protests, still primarily utilizes the “language of visibility” as its most consistently powerful tool (Armstrong, 106). Burt asserts that animal rights activists have tended to rely upon visual communication in order to circumvent overuse of written material since animals do not communicate in this medium at all (Burt in Armstrong, 106); Armstrong refers to a number of effective visual campaigns, the most pertinent being a local campaign launched by the national animal advocacy organization SAFE against the use of exotic animals in circuses, the successful result of which saw the release and relocation of two chimpanzees to Chimfunshi Wildlife Orphanage in Zambia (SAFE in Armstrong, 107). Of import was the coincidental zenith of SAFE’s national profile, income and memberships. Jasper refers to visually dynamic animals such as these chimpanzees as “condensing symbols” and contends that they remain crucial to instances of moral protest since they provide accessibility to a density of meanings relevant to a variety of audiences and levels of debate (Jasper in Armstrong, 107). Armstrong, however, draws our attention to the facts we have already seen: that those involved in the use of animals for the array of industries I have discussed—the scientific, farming and medical industries—partnered inevitably with the demands of commodity capitalism, demand that images of animal suffering remain removed from public visibility. The driving forces behind industrial capitalism are unrelenting in the maintenance of the secrets they conspire to hold in order to remove the shame of their spectacle from the public. The interminable see-sawing between hidden and exposed visual information remains a constant effect of these political struggles (Armstrong, 107).

Civil legislation, in theory a device available to utilize to prevent the abuse of sentient creatures can, as we have seen, similarly provide the interventions necessary to prevent its visibility—screening the need for reassessment whilst withholding the truth from public knowledge. This echoes Berger’s assertion that the ‘real’ or ‘authentic’ animal, as a result of these manipulations of the field of vision, ‘vanishes’ in modernity from the pressures of industry, capital and the rise of urbanization. His argument is that certain images proliferate that serve to verify this phenomenon: such as those found in zoos, pet shops and media like the Disney channel, to replace the real animal with the animal as ‘spectacle’ (Berger in Armstrong, 107–108). As Armstrong demonstrates in his detailed and penetrating analysis of the struggles displayed at the front of the political visual imaginary by both proponents and objectors to the ANZCCART Conferences (Australia and New Zealand Council for the Care of Animals in Research and Teaching), the scientist’s image farming and animal advocate’s correlative response strategies reveal just how contested this area of visibility really is. In likely anticipation of the increasing focus on the revelation of secrecy that animal advocates struggle to deliver to the public, the ANZCCART organization of 2003 devoted their focus to addressing the issue of the public perception of

animal industries—their title and theme verifying their acknowledgement of the importance of the sphere of visibility. Entitled “Lifting the Veil: Finding Common Ground” the organizers advertised their desire to reclaim public representation of their work supposedly through engaging in the language of visibility and transparency (Armstrong, 109).

The seminars and reports detailing the scientist’s renewed strategy were extremely carefully qualified and emphasized the perceived need for balance, reliability and authority to be reclaimed for the sphere of public understanding. This follows the original pattern of rebuttal of anti-vivisectionist integrity—that they are “biased, inaccurate, irrational and non-authoritative” but it does reveal, as Armstrong shows, a sense that former autonomy over these strongholds of knowledge are perceived to be on ever shakier ground due to the ongoing rise of the animal rights movement (110).

Predictably, the largely text-based rhetoric emerging from ANZCCART 2003 attempts to justify current rates of research through citing the apparent benefits of continued, indeed, increased animal research, for achieving advances in the treatment of human illness and disease (110). The most significant of the tactics Armstrong refers to as ‘image farming’, is designed by the vivisection movement to stifle any public objection through the re-imaging of animal research as an ethical necessity for the wellbeing of humanity, whereby the suffering of animals is negated through the humane care and uncompromising dedication of a team of experts who claim sole understanding of the complexities of such endeavours. In fact, human and animal lives are promoted as dually benefitting from the necessary and painstakingly monitored projects of the research community. Berger wholly admonishes such an approach as an excessive instance of the “disappearance of human-animal relations behind a display of animal-themed capitalist spectacle” (Berger in Armstrong, 111). Here, dualities are reinforced and maintained, hidden behind diversions that play on the fears of a public immersed in an already rigid capitalist hierarchy. Once more the ‘real’ animal transforms to the analytic—as Lynch remarked, transformed, as it were, into data (111). The interaction of the laboratory animal and worker is transformed into what Armstrong describes as the ‘welfare animal’—a hybrid constructed from the rhetoric of the scientific research industry manipulated to encourage buy-ins to corporate values. The report released by a higher profile animal advocacy coalition, designed to counter the scientific argument on the common terrain of academic research, was effectively nullified through the careful advertisement of the animal rights activist as terrorist, effectively masking the welfare issues the debate was centred upon. Again visibility dominated as a tool to reduce the advocate to criminal status as images of the balaclava-clad protestors associated with international terrorist incidents were blazoned across television networks’ primetime spots nationwide (113). It is within this image that the ambiguities around the struggle for visibility lie, whereby media manipulation features as a ploy to obscure visibility, resulting only in renewed emphasis on stereotypes and clichés associated with both sides of the constructed duality—researcher and terrorist prevail, cloaked in an obscure anonymity that remains separate from public involvement (114).

Armstrong rightly shows that it is the consuming public that is heard most clearly by the animal research faction, particularly in New Zealand where the vast majority of research is directed towards the agricultural animal as coveted national resource. As a result, there has been an emphasis on the re-branding of New Zealand animal produce as cruelty-free—an issue not lost on the scientific delegates: “concern in some countries as well as in Australia and New Zealand about the way animals are farmed will offer marketing opportunities to provide new products which meet the ethical concerns of the moderate majority who would still

like to eat animal products of humanely reared animals” (Hemsworth in Armstrong, 114). The shifting concern of the public from price to quality has developed into a preoccupation with welfare, that is there is an escalating element of consumer behaviour driven by conscience—this is becoming increasingly predominant throughout the West. Many observers have claimed that this issue is directly related to a tension in the visual field arising from issues of globalization, resulting in sensitivities being stirred in visitors to New Zealand who have grown accustomed to the absence of farm animals in the European visual field. Growing awareness of the contradictions endemic to the place of animals in a fluctuating global visual image bank have lead to an industry response geared towards the middle class desire that essentially rejects envisioning cruelty (116). The suffering animal is increasingly unacceptable for a burgeoning sensitized public whom, I would assert, are becoming increasingly discomfited by a sense of their own complicity in practices that might entail brutality. A growing public dissonance for any agribusiness or animal industry-related image that is not welfare-friendly is enforcing a new apprehension to form between technology and images of pastoral idealization that once predominated in New Zealand (118). Of particular relevance to my focus is this accumulating sense of social accountability that is forcing the major players of local and international business to reevaluate their entire approach to the visualization of the animal in culture. Of course, this advancement is informed purely by the drive for continued profit—it is the public ethical sensibility that is evidencing radical revisioning. Much like the sense of shock that emerged from the publication of the photographs of Abu Ghraib or the revelation of the brutal beating of a disabled person in the news, the horror that has accompanied the exposure of agribusiness-related atrocity reflects a prevailing social disgust and intolerance for barbaric practices a ‘civilized’ society should have left behind. For as long as the invisibility of the suffering body is allowed to continue, the cultural anxiety associated with a suggestion of complicity with these practices will remain appeased. There is no sense in exposing and even acknowledging the cruelties we are capable of, if they are allowed to continue under yet another safety blanket of public invisibility. Thus, the secrets remain hid, the shame is left unveiled and the spectacle is allowed to continue. It is through a continued emphasis on cultural complicity that I believe this carnival of cruelty will see its undoing. And without a persistent visualizing of this active participation whose consequence is always real and very visceral, its impact will be negated within a masked sea of banality, apathy and in consequence.

CHAPTER 4. Notes

ⁱ This mechanism of the gaze is one I find myself contending with personally every day to a greater or lesser degree and it has had such an impact on me that I cannot divorce my way of seeing and the very act of creativity in a social sphere from its affect and implications. All of the works I have produced of import have referenced this issue on a variable scale.

ⁱⁱ Whilst Virilio is generally critical of this process of seeing regarding its impact on culture and society, I do refer to aspects of his discussion to draw metaphors with my own work for creating a contextual opportunity for freshly articulated meaning to emerge through particular ways of directing the gaze.

ⁱⁱⁱ This is demonstrated in all of my recent work, but particularly in the parodic performative installation, *Reeler than Real*, whose devices will be discussed in more detail in the final chapter.

^{iv} I experienced this ‘psychosis’ and engaged myself intellectually in/through protests actions and talks but for the most part my reaction was characterized by the deep sense of despair Mirzoeff mentions. I would attribute this not so much to the undermining of myself and a sense of relation to the West as a civilized person as Mirzoeff goes on to describe, but rather at a profound sense of hopelessness directed at the very world that I live in. This includes a realization of the belligerent nature of the powers that dominate and their lack of decency and care and it included an overwhelming sense of responsibility towards those that had suffered and died so needlessly. It was also a very visceral response, creating a tangible nausea that was hugely influential in informing the physical and material horror that my ensuing *Freakshow: Performing Secrets* exhibited.

^v This is extrapolated in the following and final chapter that concentrates on the functioning of my work relative to the issues and devices I have discussed in preceding chapters.

CHAPTER 5

Performing the UnNameable: Reweaving the Spectacle within the Spaces of unCertainty and Signification

We have all had enough of hearing about the death of God, of man, of art and so on since the nineteenth century. What in fact happened was simply the progressive disintegration of a faith in perception...In the West, the death of God and the death of art are indissociable; *the zero degree of representation* merely fulfilled the prophecy voiced a thousand years earlier by Nicephorus, patriarch of Constantinople, during the quarrel with the iconoclasts: 'If we remove the image, not only Christ but the whole universe disappears.

(Paul Virilio, *A Topographical Amnesia*, 121)

We can write about pain, scientific reductionism, violence, silence and the production of meaning: and then we can stop, switch off the computer. But there cannot be an ending to this story, no formal, academic conclusion. For there cannot be an ending to memories of pain in the entrails.

(Consuelo Riviera-Fuentes, *Talking With/In Pain: Reflections on Bodies Under Torture*, 665)

There is a vast history of work by artists whose materiality emerges from their engagement with their embodiment, informed via a complex matrix of ideological and cultural backgrounds. Although since their initial inception and subsequent popularity they have been widely challenged, Freud's theories of the unconscious were hugely influential in altering the perception of the relationship between previous conceptions of the 'mind' and 'body'—and associated behavioural theory. Dadaists of the 1910s and 20s such as Tristan Tzara and Kurt Schwitters utilized multidisciplinary performative tactics to challenge traditional forms of artistic representation—such as those confined to the wall and the plinth within culturally 'sanctioned' institutions. Surrealist art forms developing out of Dada exhibited a distinct psychological focus, popularizing the Freudian fascination with sexuality and the dream state (Tracey Warr, 11). A burgeoning interest in anthropological exploration and subsequent theorization proved to be a rich source of inspiration for exploring an alternative semantics of embodiment—challenging the fixity of western rationalist individualism (Warr, 11-12).

Amelia Jones describes the veritable explosion of performance art that emerged on the Euro-American visual arts scene in the 1960's to early 70's marking, to cite Lea Vergine, a dramatic “surfacing” of the artist's body after its repression under the dictates of Modernism (Vergine in Jones, 18). Not only does this phenomenon display a marked transformation in understanding what constitutes visual art, it also represents a disruption of the manner in which the creating and viewing subject exists in relation to the wider social context of the production and experience of the visual arts. This visceral enactment of the artist's body signifies a reassertion of, in Henri Lefebvre's terms, our production as social beings in social space (Jones, 18-19).

Jones points to the parallel between body-centred art's tangential movement away from the typically unified Modern Cartesian subject and its contemporaneous post-structuralist critique. The nature of this divergence is elaborated through its contextualization relative to Modernist art history and criticism—grounded in Kantian aesthetic discourse—which requires both artist and critic to remain ‘transcendent’—devoid of idiosyncrasy and any tendency towards embodiment or a desiring subjectivity. Significantly, she argues, the body has consistently been regarded as a phobic object for over two centuries during the dominance of Modernism's dictate—regarded as threat to the Cartesian subject—the latter's apparent transcendence surpassing the need for socio-historic aesthetic contextualization. Modernism, she elaborates, privileged the notion of the disembodied subject—at the expense of the subject weighted by the inferiority of its social embeddedness—the subject excluded from the colonialist, classist and heterosexual position of patriarchal superiority (19-20). The body, as it surfaces with increasing assertion through the work of the newly emerging artists of the 1960's marks the enactment of a shift away from the oppression of the Modernist aesthetic, becoming a “locus of the self and the site where the public domain meets the private, where the social is negotiated, produced and made sense of” (Jones, 20-21). The embodied subject, in fact, acts as a locus of immanent resistance, exhibiting a site for the manifestation of the tensions between “mechanisms of power and techniques of resistance” (Feher in Jones, 23). The presence of the artist's physicality in the significantly heightened gestural art of this era appears to exist in an antagonistic relationship with the ethos of violence of the Cold War era, particularly via the stronghold of militaristic nationalism escalating in the United States and the mounting alienation effected through the dominance of mass-communication technologies (Jones, 25). The prevailing cultural amnesia that Virilio bemoans so ardently with reference to this period served as a platform of resistance for the more politically defiant gestural artists of the time. The production of mundane actions,

associated primarily with artists engaged in the work of Fluxus and Happenings, produced what Molesworth has referred to as “the registering of the body...the everyday (desiring, fleshly) body—within the work of art (Jones, 27). Carolee Schneemann’s *Meat Joy* (1964), a piece enacting the body/self of the 1960’s free love movement, typified the performance works of this era through its emphasis on the organicism and physicality of the body and its fluid carnivalesque unpredictability: “*Meat Joy* has the character of an erotic rite: excessive, indulgent, a celebration of flesh as material” (Schneemann in Jones, 27).

Pieces such as these typify the counter-cultural democratization of the body through their emphasis on personal expression. These artists flouted the singular and privatized body of the modern post-Renaissance era characterized through a predominantly cerebral, Cartesian self seeking transcendence, replacing its focus on rationality with the sexualized, desiring, physical form as a collective characterized by elements of the carnivalesque:

...the body constructed by the rules of polite conduct is turned inside-out—by emphasizing food, digestion, excretion and procreation—and upside-down by stressing the lower stratum (sex and excretion) over the upper stratum (the head and all that it implies). And the effervescent, grotesque body challenges...the closed, private, psychologized and singular body...of the modern, post-Renaissance world of individual self-sufficiency. For it speaks of the body as a historical as well as collective entity.

(Bakhtin in Jones, 27)

Furthermore, this emphasis on the tangible body refers to a preoccupation with authenticity that emerged during the late 1960’s as a reaction to the threat of the commodity culture and emerging emphasis on simulation as effects of globalizing western pan-capitalism. As subjectivities experienced increasingly problematic relations with notions of the ‘real’ and the predominance of the simulacrum—whereby the virtual image overwhelms stable reference to a materialistic sensibility—artists explored new ways of figuring their bodies within the reconstituting constraints of postmodernity. Attempts to reconfigure the body as commodity—as little more than a dispensable simulacrum—the artist’s body increasingly actualizes as a site of protest, a locational nexus of social trauma centering the struggle for “transgressing the constraints of meaning or normality” (Jones, 31). My focus on the reified stereotypical categorizations of the body emerging from fallaciously posited normativity—and the necessarily marginalized other against which it is defined, is highlighted throughout the performance cycle. Various representations of the body are explored which work in collaboration with the context of the gestural moment, to problematize the fixity of the gaze that is focused on the redundant cultural structures responsible for impeding the potential of these forms for finding alternative means of articulation. The emphasis on the body that is experienced during the performative moment comprises a microcosm that can be extrapolated to the macrocosm of ideological and physically tangible forces of power and control over the body, the latter occupying a broader purview of dominant depictions prevailing throughout much of western society.

Of further significance to understanding the implications of the consciously embodied performing subject is to take into account the notion of agency. My focus alludes to the abnormally constructed bodies and

identities existing in the secret spaces between the overbearing forces of the politically and culturally powerful dominant discourses—that which would quash the presence of the aberrant voice—in order to exclude the marginal body, both on an explicit, physical level and through ideological coercion. A central motif that prevails as a consistent trope throughout my work emerges from the lack of presence evidenced through persistent and often unabating silence, the silence of the muted body that remains othered and excluded through the workings of dominant power structures. When the veiled, silenced body is allowed centrality through the intervention of the performative gesture it responds not merely as a reaction to the still hegemonic voice of *logos*, but as a powerfully resistant other; it is not simply the oppressed subaltern speaking out in protest, but rather operates as signifier of deviant and defiant alterity that opens the doorway to alternate possibilities for inscribing its relationship to power. It is not through negative differentiation that it is defined. The bodies of normative marginalization are those that have been deprecated as ‘disabled’, ‘deformed’, ‘animal’, ‘criminal’ and ‘terrorist’, all of which necessarily carry with them negative connotation that is inherently disempowering—defined as inferior in relation to and in terms of the western hierarchical system of Cartesianism that is founded on the premise of negative differentiation. The body as signifier, what Phelan refers to as “the agonizingly relevant body of the performer” (150), through its presence alone resists the authority of the Word. Interestingly, Phelan associates grammar and the Word with metaphor—as that “which works to secure a vertical hierarchy of value and is reproductive; it works by erasing dissimilarity and negating difference” whilst the body, she claims, operates metonymically, since it functions through addition and association along a horizontal axis of contiguity and displacement (*ibid*). The presence of the body in performance, she argues, references a lack of resolution between the body *per se* and subjectivity, whereby the context of the performance utilizes the body to frame a lack of Being promised by the body, which cannot materialize without supplementation. She cites as an example the self-portraits of Cindy Sherman whereby the body's qualification as ‘female’ requires the addition of elements other than the body that form the object of the spectator's gaze (*ibid*). Whilst I agree with Phelan's aversion to both reproduction and the inevitable reductive resolution it entails and perpetuates, my view of the body and its metonymic and metaphoric functions differ somewhat. Whilst I acknowledge the body can certainly function as an index of reductive metaphor—for example, a crowd of rugby supporters all donning identical garb serves to homogenize the individual bodies into a mass of sameness, characterized by the onlooker as a ‘body of rugby fervour’ that lacks individual subjectivity—the body as canvas for metaphor is reduced to synecdoche, whereby rugby uniform equates to clichéd embodiment. Synecdoche, in essence, is really a type of metonym and so the body as metaphor for ‘supporter’ becomes condensed reductive metonym. The rugby fans are, arguably, still performing—I see no necessary distinction between the performance of a rugby enthusiast and the intentional actions of the performance artist—aside, perhaps, for some self-aggrandizing sense of importance emerging from the idea that the action of the artist is somehow superior to that of the sports fan. Metaphor and metonym, I believe, can both function productively towards increasing the scope of meaning—through their entanglement. What remains imperative to consider when regarding my practice is that the production of meaning resides, to an enormous extent, in the imaginative capacity of the spectator turned performer, whereby literal and figurative associations are only inhibited through lack of engagement. Metonymic and metaphoric expansions are both possible and necessary in the creation of new meaning—the fruition of which may explode at the fourth position of the negative complex term on the Greimassian semiotic square.

ⁱ Metaphor can lead to closure of meaning, typified through the production of cliché, yet it holds the potential for the production of new meaning through the conjoining of two or more existing ideas thereby producing a third, separate idea—to create an equation resulting in a unique formulation, instead of a product of mere reiteration. The production of a new being, a child, as the product of reproduction, can hardly be considered a mere reconstituted inflection of its parents. One example of a pervasive metaphor that serves to bind together the cycle of performances yet retain its elusiveness—signifying the promise of the unNameable—is that of the skeletal bird puppet whose arrival and departure remains ironically pervasive yet evanescent and capable of infinite articulation. The skeletal bird figure is simultaneously metaphoric and metonymic—its metaphorical extension relating to the accession of renewed deferred meaning whilst its metonymic potential unfolds relative to the context of the performative gestureⁱⁱ.

Fundamental to the workings of performance, Phelan argues, is the disappearance of the object—this claim I qualify as "the disappearance of any fixed meaning inhering in the object" (147), since the use of objects as indices of meaning, compared and contrasted in their relationship to the body within a given possible world of performance installation, is paramount to my practice. As a catalyst for multiple subjective interpretations—and therefore as a metonym—objects can function extremely effectively—as long as they are not assumed to be containers of meaning within themselves, and, as long as the context that the object is read within is considered to be as integral to the interpretation of the piece as the object itself. Phelan argues that the disappearance of the object—what I interpret as the Modernist idea of the eternal 'presence' of meaning inhering in the object—is necessary to performance, since the temporality and lack of constancy of this medium "rehearses and repeats the disappearance of the subject who longs always to be remembered" (ibid). This absence or lack generates meaning by creating a space devoid of the fixity of preconception, allowing the spectator a far richer engagement with the 'world' they are presented with and hence a rearticulation of their subjectivity—resistant to closure through the deferral arising out of the difference between the experience of the present and memory of the past. This lack that cleaves an uncomfortable dissatisfaction within the viewer who seeks resolution echoes the Lacanian *objet petit a*, whose fixity remains elusive. The skeletal bird puppet epitomizes this sense of imminent disappearance. Its presence is constant yet impossible to isolate, it marks movement, not staticity and leads one into a world without leaving a definite path to follow in its wake. It gestures at possibility without reducing itself to definition via particular nodes of articulation. It is an object whose presence resides within the subjectivities of those who partake in the piece—it is constituted of them. In this sense it gains a sense of a Shaman bird—as vehicle for the expression of spirit.

A major trait of my performance work emphasizes, then, a rejection of the essentialized, transcendental meaning associated with the tenets of High Modernism whereby the intention of the artist reifies into a Gaze of closed, myopic fixity. This deviation from an originary ontology resonates with a distinctly postmodern approach and invites the possibility for the reinvention of meaning outside of the dualities that perpetuate a hierarchically informed cultural ethos. This position rejects any penchant towards an aestheticization of the cultural product, in favour of a critical evaluation of the historical and political factors informing the ideology from which the performative gesture emerges—thereby emphasizing the role of the spectator in the creation of meaning. The spectator who participates in each instance of performativity, experiences another key element of my current practice, the temporality of the conceptual and physical spaces it occupies. Not only does the ephemeral nature of the experience connote a lack of fixity—in meaning, idea and preconception—it resists the

institutionalization and ultimate reduction of the piece as a cultural product invested in the ideology of commodification—both cultural and financial. The performance of the unNameable maintains its occupation in the present, rejecting the temptation into a circularity of endless reconfiguration of the same signs and gestures in the consciousness of the spectator.

Phelan asserts the necessity of temporality in performance for resisting reproduction and any associated tendencies towards reification—documentation thereof is only ever a record of an event which has passed and it functions only as an index initiating memory of the performative experience: "Performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so it becomes something other than performance...Performance's being...becomes itself through disappearance" (Phelan, 146). As Phelan notes, such ideas about the ephemeral aesthetic experience are not only culturally rare but are resistant to the institutional effect of the gallery whose strictures contain and silence any interaction with art that does not sanction the values and cultural critique of the Establishment. She describes a piece by Sophie Calle who exhibited anecdotal descriptions by a variety of people referencing a number of paintings stolen from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, these placed alongside photographs she had taken of the galleries. This action, Phelan argues, whose descriptive content vacillates considerably relative to each instance, substantiates the interactive nature between art and spectator thereby undermining any essentialized claims to accuracy of interpretation typified through the discourse of reproduction (146–7). This claim, that is, that meaning varies considerably relative to the interpreter, lends itself to the idea that not only is meaning not fixed, but that it does not inhere in the artwork itself—the spectator must acknowledge the necessity of their own input and thus mutate into performer whose response and interaction becomes imperative to the unfolding of the work. Phelan makes some interesting observations regarding the functioning of Calle's exhibition of absence, thereby gesturing towards what she believes to be "the performative quality of all seeing" (147).

Another issue of fundamental concern to my undertakings is the fact that performance disrupts the uninterrupted flow of capital typical of representational art that is easily reproduced (148). It thereby offers a challenge to the authoritative machinations that seek to assuage ratification of the corporeal—the bodies of those revealed through its process (ibid). Free of the resolution of the 'copy' (ref. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 1976) the visibility of the body cannot be denied in its charged presenceⁱⁱⁱ of the present, bypassing the disciplinary forces of regulation typically contingent upon reproducible art forms. It is with irony^{iv} that I acknowledge that text informed by and informing performance art necessarily undermines the irreproducibility of the event, through creating a form of documentation that, through its very existence, alters the event itself (ibid). I do not think that this is problematic *per se*, as long as it is acknowledged from the beginning that the document cannot replace the event, the latter inherently irreproducible through its ephemeral nature. As Phelan points out, in a curious double take, "the challenge raised by the ontological claims of performance for writing is to re-mark again the performative possibilities of writing itself...the act of writing towards disappearance...is the experience of subjectivity itself" (ibid). Maintaining its vast distance from the act of writing or any other form of materialized thinking, the nature of the ephemeral performance piece is such that a given number of people can share an experience that leaves behind no permanent trace (149)—and thus cannot be replicated without altering the experience. Ironically then, the experience is shared yet exists outside of duplication and to discuss the memories of this shared experience is to construct a reification—a construction founded on a search for

mutual understanding—through memory. Phelan refers to Roland Barthes's notion of script forming a trace, marking the meeting point of mutual disappearance, whereby “two people can recognize the same impossible...through find[ing] a connection only in that which is no longer there” (148–9). This notion resonates with my idea of the unNameable—that which can be sought and experienced yet cannot be contained, resolved or reproduced since to do so would involve engagement with the Word and thus with reification—that which is integral both to the destruction of staticity and the creation of new possibilities where meaning can once more be articulated. The unNameable, then, is ideally experienced by all and in a sense, shared by all. Engagement is mandatory for the production of meaning, whereby spectator becomes performer, yet no trace of this experience through whatever means can replicate that which occurred. Performing the unNameable is therefore concurrently utterly private and subjective yet fundamentally interactive and social. The unNameable is simultaneously and without contradiction impossible to share in one sense, yet necessarily shared in another.

Rather than draw attention to the overriding meaning of a cultural text, whose inherent capacity for resolution his structuralist approach would problematize, Barthes focused on its potential for the production of meaning, directing attention away from constricting forms of knowledge production (Fuery, 87). Furthermore, he emphasizes the role of the viewer or spectator as a critical element required to look beyond its superficial representation, so as to isolate the elements of the text that identify and contextualize it as a product of cultural signification (89–90). When one considers the image as a cultural text in these terms, it becomes inseparable from the social-cultural discursive structures it remains in dialogue with. In order to conceive of the larger, multidimensional process of signification it become imperative to consider the relationship of all cultural texts as a type of interdependent mesh that cannot be stripped apart and isolated in an attempt to derive their singular denotation. With particular regard to imagic texts, when one considers the multiplicitous systems of images comprising any intersection on the axes of the continued cultural moment, points of disruptive disjunctions can be determined where various meanings between texts collide. This process that undermines a singular fixity between isolated textual instances can be related to Julia Kristeva's concept of intertextuality which she defined as “the transposition of one or more *systems* of signs into another, accompanied by a new articulation of the enunciative and denotative position” (Roudiez, 15). Kristeva extended this concept as relevant to any signifying practice, in the sense that it is “a field (in the sense of space traversed by lines of force) in which various signifying systems undergo such a transposition” (ibid). This derives from Bakhtinian structuralism whereby an instance of the literary word is rearticulated as “an *intersection of textual surfaces* rather than a *point* (a fixed meaning)” (Kristeva, 65). Barthes emphasized the constant intertwining of the various systematic relations to maintain a textual propensity for the creation of new meaning (Fuery, 91).

When the viewer as spectator is confronted with a text, Barthes would claim that they are presented with the option of conforming, resisting or exploiting the code that is embedded within the abundance of signification that occupies their visual field. The significance of the code in terms of the construction of meaning is that they are instrumental in informing the hierarchical placement of signs, that is, which elements of signification predominate within any instance of spectatorial engagement. Imperative to Barthes was the act of paring down coded structures to expose their nature as culturally embedded signifiers—this practice proving an integral constituent to the process of creating meaning through active interpretation (Fuery, 96)—the viewer and the text are thus engaged in a mutually articulated dialectic. Viewing a cultural text is, hence, a dynamic

performative act that encourages the creation of new meaning, the level of which is contingent upon the degree of exchange that occurs:

The 'I' [spectator/reader] which approaches the text is already itself a plurality of other texts, of codes which are infinite or, more precisely, lost (whose origin is lost). Objectivity and subjectivity are of course forces which can take over the text, but they are forces which have no affinity with it...Yet reading is not a parasitical act...It is a form of work...I am not hidden within the text, I am simply irrecoverable from it; my task is to move, to shift systems whose perspective end neither at the text nor at the 'I'.

(Barthes, 10: 1974)

The rise of the gesturing, progressively carnivalesque embodied subject of the 1960's focused increasingly on the engagement of an actively involved spectator, evidenced in the work of Carolee Schneeman who centred the female body as artist on the public stage, and the Brazilian artist Lygia Clark, whose 'vestimentary sculptures' and 'relational objects' encouraged the spectator to participate actively in their space of creation. Her later work actively rejected elements of theatricality in performance art as well as the notion of an individualized spectator. She operated on the premise that the object serves as a vehicle for bodily experience, the latter only achievable through a collective whose relationship to the object existed on the level of the psyche and through the evocation of social mnemonics (Jones, 24). Wolf Vostell, a prominent artist initiating Happenings through the 1960's and 70's, focused on the re-contextualization of everyday occurrences, encouraging spectators to experience a renewed understanding of the absurdities and demands of life. Utilizing a methodology that echoed a Brechtian sensibility, he intended to shock the audience into reflection and reaction, compelling a reevaluation of preconceived ideas through a renewed sense of indeterminacy—the latter operating as a potential for further creativity (Jones, 28). This approach resonates with my own practice, particularly with regard to coercing the spectator to perform in an engaged and active sense with a view to rearticulating the dominant ideas emerging during the performance in a creative and dynamic sense. This can occur on the level of the individual and the collective—depending on the manner in which the spectators interact with the gestures they are met with.

Of import is Barthes focus on the dichotomy of author/reader, which he problematizes in order to undermine ascription to authorial autonomy in relation to the meaning emerging from the text. This approach is continuous with his concept of multiple significations arising from the act of critical interpretation that occurs when the spectator engages with the text. His allusion to the "death of the Author" is often misconstrued to suggest that the creation of meaning lies solely with the subject receiving the text—to be interpreted within their conceptual field—at the cost of the artist or author's agency. Barthes did not intend for the intellectual and creative input of the author to be erased in the process of negotiation with the text—rather, he is emphasizing the potential for the text to be construed and evaluated in a plethora of ways, initiated, as such, by the authors of the texts within the viewer's field of interpretation. Dynamic and rebellious readings thereby gain momentum within the unfolding entanglement of signification, allowing for multiple voices to emerge from any given textual sources. This approach is consistent with a non-originary ontology of meaning that invites reinvention

of staid cultural platitudes and stereotypes (Fuery, 98). Any predilection towards an essentialist focus is undermined directly through the creative input of the spectator, whose presence exists as a constant reply to the question of authorial autonomy.

Both Schneemann and Clark were instrumental in decrying the authorial autonomy of the traditionally privileged male, caucasian Euro-American artist typified in the essentialist practices of a modernist ethos, reclaiming agency for the traditionally marginalized subjects of social discourse through a distinct message: that the renewed authenticity of self is capable of social change. Their overtly 'process-based' work—that is, work that concentrates on the experience and not the final product typified through a modernist sensibility, rejects the focus on commodification contingent upon the privileging of notions of authorial 'genius'—realigning the balance of power more evenly in favour of the traditionally excluded body of society (Jones, 25). This echoes the sentiment evidenced in the Happenings of Allan Kaprow, who concentrated on blurring any demarcation between art and life, rejecting materials traditionally associated with the arts and replacing the transcendent figure of the artist with one whose body operates as a site of cultural empowerment (Jones, 28). My own practice actively rejects the fixity associated with authorial genius and this is evidenced in my focus on creating performative moments whose initiation and ending points are obscured to the point of vanishing so as to refer to a seamless experience of the often opposed duality of art and life. Not only does this create a sense of little to no transition between the artistic moment and 'real life', but also serves to undermine a sense of difference between artist and spectator. Furthermore, the subject matter and context that occupy the conceptualization of my pieces focuses actively on the bodies of social difference—the 'criminal', 'terrorist', 'animal' and disabled bodies of the spectacle of shame western society continues to perform—encouraging renewed articulations of these traditionally invisible and sequestered identities.

A further conceptual motif of similar relevance to the dynamics of my practice can be found in Deleuze and Guattari's idea of the rhizome. The multiple surface structure and mesh of interconnected root systems provides a strikingly visual metaphor for a non-unary intertextual exchange between varying nodes of meaning (Fuery, 112). This trope allows for the propensity for a vast array of systems and concomitant subjectivities to interact, thereby encouraging a deviation from the constraints imposed on the articulation of meaning typical of the confines of domineering ideologues. Furthermore, it prevents various systems within a given cultural setting from falling prey to historical 'preservation' and institutional isolation, encouraging heterogeneity through the process of decentering. In the process of opening up the potential for meaning to be generated by variable subjectivities, a chord is struck within the performative gesture, encouraging the spectator to find their voice (Deleuze and Guattari in Fuery, 112–113). The figurative rhizome is a principle that provides a highly relevant structural similarity to the workings of my performative instances whereby seemingly disparate and far-reaching entities find resonance within the context of the unfolding gesture. The latter, if we recall the ideas advanced by Auguste Rodin, enables a continued dynamism to animate the artistic experience as meaning retains its fluidity through the subjectivity of the viewer, avoiding the fixity of the gaze typified in the moment frozen in time that the camera lens has a penchant to suggest. The spectator interpolated by this mechanism of the gaze begins to perform the creation of meaning, their interaction with the signifying process allowing for a continued blurring to manifest across the dualistic divide once severing the role of spectator and performer.

Stability, in the sense of linear meaning that imposes closure of the performative gesture is annulled through the rhizomic structure that, even in its inevitable breakage, continues to manufacture alternative

pathways of growth and realization through a process of deviation (Fuery, 115). Meaning, in this sense, is never static—that which emerges from the imagic pools is continually referred to alternative links in the signifying chain. The state of becoming that is advanced through the continual articulation of the rhizome consistently situates the potential for new articulations at a variety of thresholds, whose positioning allow for the possibility of renewed signification to unfold through the subjectivities of all participants. This motif of reconfiguration through the introduction of deviation and difference can be compared with a moment of rupture (Fuery, 116), a tearing in the fabric of sameness and predictability whereby strains of chaos begin to erode the walls of carceral control that know nothing outside of gripping constraint—maintained behind the smothering veils of silence and invisibility. For the spectacle of containment to be threatened these fractures are necessary, their power emerging from their capacity to erode the strongholds of the hierarchies that maintain difference and oppression, their presence flouting these mechanisms of ideological incarceration.

In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes offers an interesting model of analysis of the image, with particular focus on the conceptual and signifying functions of the photograph. He focuses on the reception of the photographic image within a culturally instantiated context, asserting, as he does in relation to any text, the importance of the role of the viewer in the formation of meaning, emphasizing the fact that the spectatorial reading is inevitably also culturally produced (Fuery, 104). Although his analysis focuses on the photographic medium, the conceptual model of his study lends itself very well to an extrapolation of a broader scope of the visual image field. Barthes employs the Latin terms *studium* and *punctum* to describe the two fundamental levels of operation of the image. The *studium*, essentially, refers to the platform of recognition, or contextual basis of the photograph—mapping the coordinates of its cultural positioning. The second element punctuates the *studium* in sharp contrast to its relative platitudes, emerging from the backgrounded *studium* as a form of disturbance, a punctuation whose reception remains unaccounted for (Barthes, 26: 1981). Barthes emphasizes the relative banality of the *studium*, its generality and familiarity inducing no particular or outstanding affective response: “The *studium* is that very wide field of unconcerned desire, of various interest, of inconsequential taste: *I like / I don't like*” (Barthes, 27: 1981). Significantly, the *studium* enables insight into the intentions and practices of the Operator—the photographer or artist, the initiator of the image. The *punctum* is clearly distinguishable from the sense of shock sometimes associated with the photograph, that is, the revelation of the unknown that the camera has managed to make visually manifest—this Barthes associates with the genre of performances that are concomitant with the process of image making (32).

Barthes refers to the most common photographic image, wherein the *studium* predominates, as the *unary* photograph, the term deriving from studies in grammatical syntax. The unary photograph, according to Barthes, “emphatically transforms ‘reality’ without making it vacillate (emphasis is a power of cohesion): no duality, no indirection, no disturbance. The unary photograph has every reason to be banal, ‘unity’ of composition being the first rule of vulgar...rhetoric” (Barthes, 41: 1981). News photographs and tourist photographs exemplify this—for although they may even hold within them the propensity to traumatize, they continue to exhibit an inability to generate the affect of disturbance, they can “‘shout’, not wound” (ibid). The capacity for the image to wound is of particular interest to my practice—and by extension, the affective influence emerging from the *punctum*. I have discussed in some detail the consequences that arise from a surfeit of banal images; not only do they mirror a blanketed social apathy that is invariably maintained and perpetuated by a society governed by associated hierarchical ideologies, they actively participate in the dissemination of

further carceral control through the coercion that emerges from their dominant signification. Through an engaged and conscious awareness of the damage such apathy can give rise to, the latter resulting equally from a lack of engagement through neglect, general visceral disinterest and the overall demise of a critical interpretative response, my focus is to coerce the viewer into the role of active participant. The *punctum*, that element of the piece that maintains the power to expand out of the work and involve the viewer in an irreversible sense, is integral to the generation of further meaning that, in turn, may hold the potential to rearticulate an alternative discourse able to defy the bounds—the rejected strongholds—from which the performance was birthed.

I refer to the unCertainty of the performative moment as another integral element of a performative gesture that is able to give rise to meaning that has shed its limitations steeped in preconception. This uncertainty is multifaceted and refers variably to a motif of indeterminacy, a focus on ambiguity and the necessity of an element of chaos so as to maintain a dynamic edge to the moment—inducing a dissemination of fixity on the levels of affect, concept and physicality. For a sense of irresolution to prevail the moment must exist free of both a chosen beginning and a resolved end point, that defy intentional outcomes through a prevailing ephemerality. It is important to make a distinction between lack of focus and lack of resolution for while the work consistently obscures the closure a traditionally narrativized, authorial, scripted work encourages, the content—the subject matter that undergoes problematization—is clearly presented to the spectator in a direct and unavoidable manner so they are compelled to confront it. In fact, the lack of origin and closure blurs the boundaries between ‘life’ and ‘art’ in such a way that the unsuspecting viewer often invests a more sincere commitment to the event, since they cannot easily relegate the experience to a marginal aestheticized reification that is possible to return to at leisure. The constituent of the unknown that has the propensity to articulate renewed signification is given precedence, thereby inviting the unNameable into a space to be claimed. The importance of this wounding moment, the emerging *punctum* whose action is sudden and brief and like a small shock (49) is paramount for the functioning of this performative gesture of the unNameable as it breaks with Certainty, weaving through the spaces of signification as it whittles, sculpts, etches and paints a renewed entablature of possibility. This moment of inscription has the capacity to break with time-worn paths as it carves a new course of passage and in this sense it can be related to the image as rhizome that retains the ability to radically change its multiplicitous development—perhaps even through a need to sever from the dominant structure—whilst continuing its journey of generating alternative paths. The *punctum*, claims Barthes, presents an addition to the occupied space of signification whilst simultaneously consisting of what is already there (55). This seeming paradox makes sense when considered in light of performing the unNameable, for the origin of representation logically maintains its presence whilst simultaneously giving rise to supplementary figuration. This dynamic informing the production of meaning, it must be remembered, depends significantly on whether its positioning is grounded in a context that allows for change. The search for meaning, in other words, is necessarily manifested only through its relationship with culture, the latter preceding the process of representation: “[W]e must return to the social with which we are in contact by the mere act of existing, and which we carry about with us before any objectification” (Merleau-Ponty in Jones, 20).

The inception and development of the elusive unNameable—that slippery, unCertain articulation that laughs in the face of fixity, erupting from the performative moment in defiance at the limitations a hierarchical society would presume to impose derives, as I mentioned, from the dynamics of the supplement, emerging into

the spaces where it finds room to play in a dance of limitless signification. The very production of non-reductive meaning, of unique forms of knowledge and insight, necessarily problematizes and disavows the binary structure characteristic of western thought that derives its false sense of security through a mythic ascription to Origin. These ideas about meaning are derived from Jacques Derrida's theory of supplementarity and extrapolate remarkably well to the workings of my performative process—and the invocation of the unNameable.

As opposed to merely valorizing the marked term through the inversion of the binary which serves to perpetuate its inherent hierarchical structure, Derridean deconstruction blurs the distinction between signifier and signified through the insistence that “the signified always already functions as a signifier” (Derrida, 7: 1976). Derrida begins his attack on the quasi-scientific pretension of strict forms of structuralism through claiming that the concept of structure—the structurality of structure—is as old as western philosophy, thereby implying that the methodology of structuralist critique is not as distinct or as radical as its proponents might claim (Derrida, 278: 1978). Furthermore, Derrida contends that structure is always necessarily reduced and neutralized, by virtue of the necessary attribution of a centre or fixed origin. The function of the latter is not only to imbue it with an organized coherence, but also to limit what he terms the *play* of the structure within its total form (278). At the structural centre point, transformation or substitution of structural elements is impossible, given that it is, by definition, a fixed point. This explains the reason, therefore, that the history of western philosophy has designated this perceived central point as capable, by nature, of escaping structurality, albeit that it is the origin or point governing the structural form and its concomitant, limited *play* of structural permutation. It has hence been deemed possible that the centre could paradoxically exist both inside the structure as its centre and outside of it, since it is not part of the totality. Thereby, given the fixed (and in a sense synchronic) nature of the centre, any substitutions or permutations thereof necessarily arise out of a history of meaning, (that is, emerge from a diachronic linearity), whose imagined origin (*arché*) and whose anticipated end (*telos*) emerge in the form of what Derrida refers to as *presence* (279). He argues, therefore, that the entire history of the concept of structure comprises a linked chain of determinations of the centre. The history of western metaphysics, Derrida argues, reflects a history of metaphors and metonymies attempting to represent this fixed concept of the centre, origin or *presence* as a fundamental, absolute principle—such as that of essence (*eidos*) (ibid).

Absolutely significant to Derrida's argument is his claim that the centre or origin becomes representative as soon as the nature or structurality of structure is thought about (280). The act of contemplation requires one to think representatively, thoughts themselves are structures—mediations between the apparent origin and the language we use to articulate them. The origin, or essence, therefore, is necessarily a substitute or representation as soon as it is thought about—the centre, in fact, does not exist:

...central presence has never been itself, has always already been exiled from its own substitute. The substitute does not substitute itself for anything which has somehow existed before it...it was necessary to begin thinking that there was no center...that it was not a fixed locus but a function, a sort of non-locus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions came into play.

(Derrida, 280: 1978)

Derrida refers to this ‘myth of the origin’ as the “absence of the transcendental signified”, which is never absolutely present outside a system of substitutions—each of which is a *copy* of the substitute it differentiates and defers from, resulting in an infinite extension of the *play* of signification—this he terms *différance* (ibid).

Ironically, as Derrida observes, attempts at destroying the ‘myth of origin’, that is, the act of decentering, is circular in that there does not exist a language within the entire history of metaphysics that does not rely on the implicit postulation of the origin—that is not logocentric. Hence, when engaging in a study of meaning, attempting to refute the presence of the transcendental or privileged signified and a limitless domain of structural *play* is a circular enterprise, since to do so would require rejection of the concept of the ‘sign’ and its accompanying language. This cannot be done whilst still enabling a discussion of that which one wishes to critique and furthermore, it runs the risk of a reductive disturbance of the relation of the signifier to the signified (281). Derrida describes two heterogeneous ways of erasing the difference between the signifier and the signified: the first consists in reducing the sign to concept or thought. The second consists in problematizing the opposition between the sensible and the intelligible, the signifier and signified. It is here that the paradox arises, for the metaphysical reduction of the sign requires the opposition it is attempting to reduce. In other words, attempted reduction of the antinomial relationship paradoxically relies on this same antinomy in order to proceed, hence the inherent circularity of metaphysical discourses based on the destruction of metaphysical structures (ibid). Given, then, that the transcendental signified cannot exist, (except as a substitute in which case it is not transcendental) structural totalization is impossible since the structure is devoid of origin or essence which denies it infinite status. Hence, the nature of the structure comprises the *play* of infinite substitution due to its status as a finite field, decentered and delimited through language which, by nature, cannot transcend signification—this *play* Derrida refers to as *supplementarity*. The signifier that replaces the absence of the centre—the signified, is, thereby, *the supplement* and always exists in abundance in ratio to the ‘lack’ of the signified it is attempting to substitute (289–90). According to Derrida, then, there are two essentially irreconcilable approaches to be taken to the problem of structure, of signs and of *play*. The first follows the futile path of attempting to decipher the origin, the other affirms *play*, turning away from the origin, discarding the quest for the essential, the absolute, and its concomitant hierarchy of oppositions (292). If a restrictive structuralist approach is sought, on the other hand, Derrida warns that it runs the risk of giving inadequate attention to *force*—the creativity of that under analysis: “*Form* fascinates when one no longer has the force to understand force from within itself. That is, to create” (Derrida, 5: 1978).

Furthermore, Derrida asserts that a common assumption made by those undertaking a structuralist analysis is the ability to provide a totalized critical discourse that exceeds the ‘determined’ totalities of classical history. The structuralist quest for knowledge of the totalized form thereby necessitates the neutralization of content, or the “living energy of meaning”—which encompasses an essentially destructive criticism (Derrida, 5: 1978). Not only do extreme structural approaches give a mere illusion of technical liberty when they reach the point of becoming methodical, they exhibit, according to Derrida, an anxiety of the notion of originary *Being* as a threat that must be contained through such practices of excessive schematization (6: 1978). When the framework of construction, the structure itself as an internally unified assemblage, becomes the critic’s sole preoccupation—when it is not merely a method of critiquing a work but is attributed as the essence of the work itself—this Derrida terms *ultrastructuralism* (15: 1978). This occurs predominantly when the metaphorical

sense of the notion of structure is ignored, that is, when meaning is confused with its morphological, metaphorical model, thereby attributing more interest to the figure itself and compromising the *play* of meaning within. Through its very nature, the structural metaphor is incapable of adequately portraying the quality and intensity of the *play* of meaning. Hence the difference and deferral created by infinite substitution of the *supplement*—its infinite equivocation—is untranslatable into a mere difference of formal changes (18). In addition, alongside the realization of meaning itself, the transitional act of movement toward meaning is disregarded through this essentialist totalizing form of structuralism: “not only force and quality, which are meaning itself, but also duration, that which is pure qualitative heterogeneity within movement—is reduced to the appearance of the inessential for the sake of this essentialism or teleological structuralism” (21: 1978). This requirement for simultaneity of emergent meaning is, for Derrida, necessarily implicit in all structuralist projects since ignorance thereof denies access to the (assumed) totality—the ‘essence’ of the work. Instead, he argues that revelation and “surprise” of meaning can only be accessed through a reading which is developed in duration, through the dialogue between the “simultaneous and the nonsimultaneous” (24: 1978). Furthermore, the structuralist attempt to protect the ‘internal’, ‘inherent’ meaning of the work and its absolute simultaneity often results in a rejection of the historicity of the work. This not only disregards the history of the work existing as that which is immediately perceptible prior to interpretation, but also denies the internal historicity and the existence of meaning in the present since it remains fixed—devoid of the *play* of signification (14: 1978).

Given the strength, lucidity and profundity of Derrida's convincing arguments for the continuous, infinite and amoebic nature of *supplementarity*, of the workings of *différance*, it would be both naïve and misguided to assert their fallaciousness. To do so would be to erroneously conjure the "myth of the transcendental signified" and to posit ontological closure of meaning. This is not my argument. Rather, through accepting Derrida's assertions I question the type of meaning capable of manifesting within contexts that are contingent upon social and political factors, drawing attention to these same constraints that then may impose closure through oppressive, disciplinary forces impacting on meaning that serve to curtail and reduce signification and hence operate as indexes of futility regarding the positing of the endless *play* of the signifier.

Derrida's theory of supplementarity provides a fundamental model for extrapolation to the dynamics of my performance practice. The *play* of the signifier represents the process of rejecting any ascription to essential or absolute meaning—that which remains rigidly fixed within the immovable hierarchical structure governing ideologies premised on a binary system, whereby the negatively marked term, that is, the body marginalized through difference, presides as the inferior ‘opposite’ to the governing ideal perpetuated within the status quo of carceral ideological cultural systems. These systems, articulated within Derrida's formulation as the totalizing structures exemplified through an ultrastructuralist model, deny the force of the creative gesture necessary for the articulation of unique forms of meaning through a circular preoccupation with the fascination of their own *form* whose origin is fallaciously premised, such as, for the purposes of this thesis, the normalized body. The *play* emerging from the “living energy of meaning” (Derrida, 5:1978) is thereby compromised to the point of neutralization, in the process of focusing exclusively on the exhausted norms and stereotypes promulgated by the dominant ideologies of the status quo. Fixation on the structural metaphor, here translatable to the rigidity of a society governed by hierarchies privileging the falsely postulated unmarked body, inhibits, to the point of complete denial, the difference and deferral integral to the continued substitution of the supplement, destroying

the potential for alternative articulations of the body to manifest beyond the silence and invisibility of the totalizing society that negates them. The binary structure informing the ethos of the society remains intact, neutralizing the possibility inhering in the creative gesture that seeks to transgress the walls of containment that continue this cultural and political subjugation. The “qualitative heterogeneity within movement” (21: 1978) of which Derrida speaks is denied within a cultural structure that prevents space even to breathe a word of defiance, let alone the provision of space necessary to articulate the possibility of the revelation of the Secrets—“of surprise” (24: 1978) that would intervene in the unabated continuation of the Spectacle.

The primary objective of my performance practice is to create a space whereby the supplement can enjoy its play of infinite substitution so as to allow for the rearticulation of meaning that breaks with the totalizing forms of the hierarchical structures that prevent the movement of the unfolding gesture—that requires its instantiation to be acknowledged and engaged in terms of the spectator. Such an approach breaks with the authorial intent that would prohibit such infinite equivocation, denouncing the finality of both social and individual domination.

An acknowledgment of the historicity informing the specifics of the work becomes a requisite element of such a performative moment. Not only does this function to situate the hierarchical problematic within a scenario whose components can be understood, it engages the participants directly with the ideas and structures of power that operate to articulate the constraints of representation of the body that emerge as effect of the fixity of the cultural system. This requires an acknowledgement of limits—the extremes against which the supplement articulates and defers from. These totalizing extremes operate as a base point for the possibility of alternative meaning making—of creativity—to begin. Acknowledging the limits of social containment allows for the inception of the problematization of those limits to occur. The extremes of social stereotyping are met with in order to initiate their undoing. This process requires an identification and concomitant acknowledgement of the hierarchies that dominate the categorization of variously marked and opposed bodies and identities, for without recognition of the structures and forces of power informing these cultural constraints, they cannot be potentiated into the possibility of confrontation with a view to transgression. The latter is only allowed avenue for movement when a certain tension is manifest within the performative space. This dynamic is variable in its scope for expression, however, there must exist the potential for alternative articulation, for the possibility for varying meaning to emerge through the play of the supplement expressing an altered mode of representation. Significantly, an altered expression of dominant forms of meaning requires acquiescence and acknowledgement of the mistake of presuming the totality of former dominant forms of knowledge. In other words, the subjects participating within the space of potentiation for alternative meaning making must consent to the exposure of their own preconceptions—of those social structures consented to by the majority that initially led to the imbalance of agency. The latter is ratified by the forces actuating the misuse and abuse of power—those forces that allow for the maintenance and perpetuation of the oppression of the marked body. The transcendent gaze that would incarcerate the abnormal body must sacrifice its omnipotence and concede its capacity for error. A forfeiture of the supremacy of the dominant ideology is required for alternative paths of representation to be made available for exploration. This necessity for the relinquishment of control not only requires a certain willingness to reconsider previously held ideas of the nature of the truth of the representation of the body, it must also acknowledge that this totalitarian approach is burdened with error, the mistake of presuming the transcendence of meaning and knowledge of marginal subjectivities.

Admission of the limits of social and individual capacity is never a task that is easily internalized—the imbalance of power is often allowed to perpetuate through the deferral of responsibility to an external source. Part of my performative practice focuses on emphasizing the constraining ethos towards which all spectators contribute through some degree of participation. The spectator is coerced to relinquish control of falsely assumed notions of separatism in a society of individuals who, for the most part, allow for the continuation of a status quo that consents to the continued oppression of the marked and liminally categorized body. The greater the degree of participation in the work, the more likely it is that the spectators begin to understand their role in the forces of cultural complicity that allow for these forms of prejudice—this totalization of the structure of the dominant oppressive ideology—to perpetuate. The focus on participation—on the affect of accountability—means that the experience of the spectator turned performer can amount to the degree of discomfort many individuals would take pains to avoid. This eschewal, however, arises from a false sense of the autonomy of the individual—the latter typified in western societies which promote the myth of individualism over a community who might share the burden of responsibility for cultural cruelties. Through the dynamic of my practice I am the least likely to impose blame on any single individual who participates—this in itself negates my focus on the denial of authorial intent. All participants form part of the collective who contribute to the manner in which meaning is allowed to articulate—or not. The dominant ideologies prevailing in holding the reigns of power, that are introduced to the spectator in the performative space of unCertainty, are those that I have observed in society and, without doubt, in myself.

There are aspects of performance artist Angelika Festa's work that form a number of interesting resonances and contrasts with my own undertakings. Her works, asserts Phelan, are “contingent upon disappearance...trace[ing] the passing of the woman's body from visibility to invisibility, and back again” (Phelan, 153). For her performance piece *Untitled Dance (with fish and others)* Festa hung suspended from a pole for twenty-four hours, wrapped to the beam with white sheets at an 80° angle, her face—eyes covered with silver tape—turned away from the ground. Her feet, resting on a small black cushion, were projected in close-up onto a small screen behind her whilst a video monitor in front of her featuring the embryology of a fish played on a continuous loop. A smaller monitor facing her played time-elapsd documentation of the performative 'dance', replaying and reinflecting the entire performance (153). Whilst Phelan induces that the visual overlaying of images of death, birth and resurrection refer to their philosophical and mythological inseparability, she claims that the work is primarily a spectacle of pain—the labour and pain inhering in the endless passage between visibility and invisibility (ibid). It is imperative to state that the spectacle arising out of the interventions emerging from *Freakshow: Performing Secrets*, the first work in the performance cycle, founded upon the experiences of bodies subjected to the brutalities of the barely imaginable pain, torture and humiliation of the incarcerated prisoner—is not to be read as a facile appropriation of another's suffering. The presentation of the body within a carefully chosen context amongst a bricolage of signification is not intended to function merely as a reference to another reality comfortably appropriated from a liberalist western perspective whereby the body becomes a fetishized reification of an invisible other's pain. Although certain signifiers are used to index the mechanisms of cruelty victimized bodies are subjected to, they are not to be read as denotative representations of realities only gleaned through dubious and far from neutral sources. Pain, that state of abjection that remains essentially irresolvable and beyond the confines of signification, is only present as a factor indexing the possibility of experience. A connection to the pain being referenced is shared by the

spectator through their physicality and their implicit connectedness to the cultural forces that generate, articulate and maintain such brutality. Their engagement, even if it is only through silent contemplation, remains a necessary factor in the imminent creation of alternate possible worlds whereby they are faced with that which they perhaps would rather not see, would rather was kept silent. Common to all of my pieces is the imagining of a world that is uncanny—a bricolated conglomeration of signification sourced from the ‘real’ world and reinvented to reference a reimagining of seeing, rearranging the cultural order to create a world—or rather a space beyond words that can only be described as bizarre, surreal and sometimes chaotic—unNameable. These terms of description, in a sense, mean nothing, that is, *no thing*—no particular manifestations that can rest in the ease of resolution and reflect a reconstitution of the shameful display of representation perpetuated through normative hierarchized ideologies. I liken such spectacle to the imaging of an alternative reality where anything is possible. A sphere the size of a pin-prick buried beneath one's toenail might contain not only other beings but a wholly different universe, a paradigm so vastly different from our own not only in scale but of a form and concept so alien it beggars belief—precisely the mechanism necessary to expose, interrogate and perhaps even destroy existent beliefs in our world so as to etch new signification into the open arms of possibility.

Phelan outlines what she deems the broad tenets of Fesa's *Untitled*. She claims that her performance strives to display the interrelated nature of some of the tacit oppositions that western metaphysics lay claim to, that is, birth and death and time and space. Through the act of suspending the body between two poles—indicative of paired polarities, Phelan claims that Festa's work suggests that it is only within the space between the oppositions that 'a woman' can be represented (153). Like Festa, the primary focus of my thesis and performance practice concerns the problematization of the reductive binarized hierarchical structures founding the basis of reductive western thinking, whereby I focus on the construction of the alterity of disability, the 'animal' and the 'criminal'. However, instead of alluding to the liminal space between oppositions arising from the *lack* indicated through difference in a minimalist sense, I refer to the absurdity of their polarized structuration by emphasizing the necessary inextricability of their construction through the confluence of their excess. Commonly recognized signifiers relating to each 'pole' are bricolated to create a warring, seemingly unified entanglement that is suggestive of an alternate reality which importantly and ironically is the one in which we conduct our lives. The veil of silence and invisibility is thereby ostensibly referenced to, encouraging the spectator to lift it and see with renewed sight that which lies beneath. Rather than create a world that exists within the realms of science fiction, or fiction for that matter, this carnivalesque explosion derives from 'fact'—that is, fact as it is presented to the individual as consumer of the image. As opposed to Festa's work *Untitled*, the emergence of meaning is born from excess. Disjointed confluence, then, creates the lack or, rather, space to be articulated by the viewer. This space, the space of the unNameable and of Uncertainty, exists as the outlet from the barrage of perceived jarring inconsistency melded to the realization that innumerable potential worlds are possible—as somewhat fantastical anticipations of the promise of renewed signification. Fresh meaning and its promise of the articulation of alternate potentialities arises as uncanny portal to the creation of completely different possible worlds, whose content becomes manifest through the spectator who performs the creative act by embroidering inaugurally from the entanglement they are compelled to engage with.s By prising open the framework, underground and otherworldly tunnels beckon, ghostly in the ether, waiting to be imbued with form and dimension.

There is a correlation between Festa's central image in *Untitled* that Phelan describes as “Future-as-Unborn” (156) and the invocation of the unNameable as possibility—both rely on the presence of embodied action in the present, devoid of both origin and conclusion. The body catalyses the immediacy of responsive signification, demands recognition of its state and the implicit consequences alluded to through its contextual situation. It is my intention that the urgency typified in the immediacy of the performative context serves to initiate a response in the spectator, such that they are compelled to engage with active decisiveness rather than opt for the illusory plenitudes typified by dispassionate observation. For this reason, the security of the spectator is necessarily threatened. Rather than teasing at their physical comfort, the rug is intentionally whisked from beneath their emotional and conceptual sensibilities, for the perpetuation of contentment does little to agitate one into action. As opposed to Festa's piece where the viewer, according to Phelan, is made to feel “masterless” (158), my performances engender in the viewer sufficient passion and discomfort that they contemplate their sense of self-autonomy. Indeed, their ego must, on some level, become threatened such that its maintenance requires engagement on their part in order to interrogate their belief system—to stand back and ignore the spectacle is to not feel sufficiently riled to alter it, or at the least it indicates an inability to fully comprehend its significance.

Phelan refers to history figured cyclically through the endless repetition of birth and death (156)—rather than the linear progression of time characterized by definitive origin and end. This figurative embodiment of an alternate conception of time—that which existed prior to the rationalist Christian formation of finitude—features prominently throughout my practice, particularly in the pieces that eschew the linearity typified through the markers of beginning and ending. Time outside of time—the human rules of time and time at its most fleeting—mark entry into alternative worlds of possibility^v. Of further consequence is the implication of the body in pain outside of the framing lens of the eye—whose boring window often leads to comfortable conclusion through the resolution of preconception as opposed to any feature indexed through persona or body. *Freakshow: Performing Secrets* demands the spectator see the unraveling of torture under the guise of a children's party game—that which they, I presume, would rather remain obscured. Again, this encourages the viewer to utilize sight beyond their normal capacity whilst the body in pain that produced *Reeler than Real* turns the lens around to frame the world through its eyes thereby avoiding the damning gaze that would intrude upon and shatter its own sense of autonomy and power. *Wish: About Spaces* opens a new vista of sight beyond that which is normally perceived in the creation of a shamanic space outside of linear time—a different possible world where the hierarchies, agendas and inconsistencies of the western paradigm have no significance and hence no impact—a world where magic can happen.

Another similitude between Festa's *Untitled* and *Freakshow: Performing Secrets* is a point made by Mirzoeff regarding the treatment of the Other typified in the dominant western depiction of the detainees of Abu Ghraib, emphasizing their marked difference. Phelan argues that the minimalism of Festa's work encourages the viewer to make a multitude of associations with the single image they are presented with (160), the image is metonymic in its potential for the inscription of meaning. *Untitled*, Festa argues, incites association with ideas that are commonly defined against that which they are not, that is, through negative differentiation. It was my intention that the images I utilize in my performances, encourage multiple layers of reading and interpretation—that may both accord with or contradict one another. This is particularly desirable considering my rejection of didactic authorial meaning which merely isolates and discounts those who do not share the imposing view

whilst simultaneously serving the artist's ego. Since my work is contextualized through the problematics of the western binary system, the negatively defined Others that are marginalized through dominant discourse produced through their concomitant systems of power feature in these pieces. It must be emphasized, however, that the intentional problematization and entanglement of the binary necessitates that no clear distinction is cleaved between 'them' and 'us'—precisely to point to the constructedness of these premises. As Phelan remarks, "That these terms are themselves slippery, radically subjective, and historically malleable emphasizes the importance of a fluid and relative perceptual power" (160–61).

Donald Kunze states that as a general principle, that is, beyond its purely visual application, anamorphosis lends itself to the idea that "multiple meanings can be materially and mutually supported within the same material circumstances...that it is the implicit structure behind any multiple 'reading' of events" (Kunze, *Anamorphosis*, 22 June 2010). When materiality is structured through the device of the metonym, anamorphosis, he claims, alludes to the *objet petit a* (ibid)—what Žižek describes as the essentially unsymbolizable hole at the centre of the symbolic order (ibid)—and it is this experience of lack or surplus in the Other that I hope to engender in the spectator so as to stimulate an interactive, interpretive response necessary for the development of new possible worlds of meaning. The necessary incompleteness of the performative gesture invites response through a type of *aposeopsis*—the silence that follows the want of the lack of resolution beckons the audience to perform, thereby creating a continuum through their own conceptual input.

One useful way of conceiving my use of anamorphosis is well illustrated through the Venn diagram depicting two or more overlapping circles. Two worlds or ideas, for example, share a commonality designated through the overlapping zone which, through an anamorphic shift, creates a third possible world out of the confluence of the two. It is this concept that describes my earlier argument, since the area of overlap simultaneously potentiates new meaning through metonymic confluence and, I argue, a zone for the production of fresh meaning through metaphor that is not entirely of either zone yet birthed from both. For example, a performative piece may comprise signifiers derived from the Abu Ghraib prisoner torture evidence; those of the Asiatic bears who are kept enclosed in oppressive incarceration for the 'production' of their bile; those of stilted limbs lengthened through Ilizarov devices and signs depicting the genocide of the Australian Aborigines through invasive colonial practices. The points of chiasma where the oppositions converge invoke the chaotic and the absurd, that is, that which is necessarily incongruent within established systems of meaning. Another way of conceiving the anamorphic device, again referenced through Kunze, is that of the Lacanian idea of the irresolution arising from the lack or surplus preventing closure of the circle of desire (ibid)—thereby initiating, in the context of the performances I envisage, a craving that is intended to incite the spectator to action, even if this only eventuates on the level of the concept. The anamorphic disparity is held together through the constancy of the performer's body and the continuity of the lead performers and presence of the puppets—particularly that of the unNameable bird skeleton—creating, as Kunze terms it, a material substructure grounding the struggle for meaning occurring at the level of signification. Anamorphosis is difficult, if not impossible to definitively describe since its quintessential quality, like the unNameable, defies definition—it remains solely accessible through experience. Kunze makes an interesting claim regarding the anamorphic device, again from a Lacanian perspective. When the subject becomes immobilized by the lack of resolution that results from the gap in the circle of desire, they respond by "imaginatively projecting a new land at an

"impossible distance" from his/her own barred position" (ibid)—this description lends itself analogously to the creation of new possible worlds of meaning that are initiated in the spectator as they interact with the work.

The eye, and through extension, the functioning of the gaze that severs subjectivity and objectivity—the act of looking itself—is of fundamental importance to the entire performance cycle, since seeing and describing are two of the most dominant ways in which hierarchical differences are created and articulated. The working of anamorphosis is absolutely central to the functioning of the spectatorial gaze. Like Festa's *Untitled*, fundamental to the act of seeing the performing subject is the requirement that the spectator is seen. Furthermore, awareness thereof increases as the morphing from disembodied spectator to embodied performer occurs within the once-observer. The latter, effectively, becomes integral to the image through the process of seeing—anamorphically becoming the image within the image and the necessary catalyst for the spontaneous production of meaning^{vi}.

In Foucault's *History of Sexuality* he argues that the agency of domination does not reside in the one who speaks...but in the one who listens and says nothing" (Foucault, *HOS*, 64). This claim informs the basis of all of my performance work, since it is the chosen silence and dispassion of those observing cruelty, torture and the infliction of pain on the bodies of others that, I assert, serves to both validate and perpetuate these practices. This lack of engagement can be translated as intentional ignorance and signifies the tacit complicity of those who maintain a safe distance from such public spectacle whose seeming privacy, they would maintain, justifies self-imposed blinkering. Silence, then, becomes metonymic as the state of lack of engagement of the observer who resists acknowledging their interpellation within the socio-political structures of power informing the discourses prevalent in my work. The apathetic observer who chooses to look away and ignore the problematization of the binary structures presented in my work, implicitly validates these hierarchical structures. A consciousness of disinterest manifested for example, in *Freakshow*, sanctions not only the torture and abuse of vivisected animals, 'criminals', terrorists and colonized subjects, but also the hierarchical structure that places human bodies above animals—the construction of the animal body thereby, ironically, is occupied by the 'opposing' species underlying the binary—the monkey and the terrorist represent the abjected animal other. The presence of the spectator within the space of suffering that is represented through performances such as these, underlines their lack of pain, their physical freedom and their complicity in the exacting of these torturous practices should they choose to remain comfortably detached.

A device I consider fundamental, therefore, to my practice, is to create the liminal space as portal to alternative possible worlds, not only where the hierarchies of existing worlds are interrogated but where the conventional relation between the performer and spectator is necessarily blurred. Engagement within this unNameable space is necessarily unpleasant through its qualities of enforced interaction, through the act of unveiling that requires negotiation with the *objet petit a*—the elusive challenge endemic to the work.

Phelan describes a genre of performance art referred to as "hardship art" or "ordeal art" that strives to maintain a distinction between presence and representation through the use of the singular body as a metonymic device to be witnessed as the site of the experience of pain—thereby asking the spectator to accomplish the seemingly impossible: to share in the death of the individual through rehearsal, since to share the actual experience is a priori impossible (152). Phelan argues that the promise elicited through this performance is to learn the value of loss—of that which cannot be seen again. This argument is particularly relevant regarding my conception of *Freakshow: Performing Secrets*, whereby the body is presented for a limited time, in various

contexts of vulnerability, pain and torture. Amongst the many unspoken questions and ideas offered to the spectator for contemplation are those that hint at the passivity of spectatorial distance and its concomitant complicity in the perpetuation of barbarism and cruelty through inaction—whether this is the result of a sense of helplessness or straightforward apathy induced through lack of both empathy and sympathy. One of the implications of such a performance is to invoke in the viewer a sense that to distance oneself does not make one immune to pain—to arouse a sense of apprehension or even tangible fear that the viewer's own body, indeed their own existence, is not free of the impending threat of violence and that perceived immunity through impassivity is illusory. The body is thus implicated on three levels—most tangibly the body of the performer and hence the bodies of those that the performer's body indexes. Further to this is the body of the spectator whose physical presence within the context of the piece implicates their necessary involvement beyond the physical—the latter in fact a direct result of their in/activity on the levels of the cultural and the political. The sense of indifference engendered through lack of response becomes more apparent if a number of viewers display disinterest; likewise if they attempt to come between the body and its hidden torturers through active participation, their role as active agents that hold the propensity for change is heightened. This dialectic between the singular viewer observing from a 'safe' distance and the necessary complicity in these brutal acts on dual levels of both individual and the community of spectators—of which the latter is a synecdoche for culture—becomes relevant here. The singular presentation of the body in performance is concerned with so much more than the body of the generative performer. Its presence, its very physicality as flesh that feels and breathes and perceives, initiates a plethora of questions that the spectator is left to consider, all of which feature the role of the spectator in the work—what, in fact, may the spectator be rehearsing for?

Performance Practice

Is not the dream essentially, one might say, an act of homage to the missed reality—the reality that can no longer produce itself except by repeating itself endlessly and some never attained awakening.

(Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 58)

My performative practice initiates through an exploration and confrontation of seemingly limitless referential sites of meaning, within the 'space of Certainty' commonly characterised by reduced, one-dimensional cultural articulations tied to discursive frameworks of marginalization and dominant power structures. This practice requires the isolation of dominant problematic ideologies as manifestations of exclusionary discourses, followed by the process of determining the state of embodied meaning that is required to engage with that ideology. Consideration of binarized meaning-making as necessarily problematic will be integral to all performances and operates as a departure point for this endeavour.

This is followed with performative gestures entailing the 'undoing' and problematization of the state of embodied meaning exemplified by the reductive structures isolated in the prior 'period of Certainty'. Through the creation of altered embodied states, the aforementioned strictures are problematized and interrogated. The type of alteration chosen will depend on the nature of the instance of closure being addressed. The aim is to free meaning made corporeal implicated in the structures seeking to contain it and presenting it as capable of *play*—of the carnivalesque and is necessarily confrontational in its signification since it is performing the task of refiguring commonplace and normalized representations of the body. It creates a spectacle in that sense and begins to draw on the ties that bind all participants in the performance so as to initiate the engendering of a sense of complicity. No hierarchy exists to create a duality of 'spectator versus performer' who are, for all intents and purposes, indistinguishable, in order to draw nearer to accession of the unNameable and thus transgress the reduced referent. The absolute necessity of performance art as *process* over product undermines hierarchical structures of authorial intention. The act of transgression is of primacy here to ensure that "the myth of the transcendental signified" (ref. Derrida: 1976) and the myth of transcendence itself is not assumed or confused with transgression. I propose that accession to the unNameable is possible in so far as the signification structures of the Nameable are problematized and 'undone'—the confines and closure thereof are not only undermined but demolished. In this state—the state of the unNameable—the only projection regarding its nature that I can offer is that of chaos and of unCertainty—neither Being nor its contradiction, non-Being. The uncertainty I speak of not only references the varying alternative representations of the body that emerge through the performance, but are extrapolated to the workings of power and control, undermining the former hierarchies that sustain them. I do not attempt to transcend representation and meaning making, acknowledging my own reliance on the frameworks of representation that define me and that I use to define myself. Transcendence as the act of going beyond human experience is antithetical to the emphasis on *process* I espouse in my methodology. Neither I nor anyone else involved in this endeavour will relinquish *process* or the networks that define us, however a state as close to chaos as is possible must be reached to truly convert the hackneyed referent into a state of unCertainty—into the spaces between the unNameable and signification, within the 'spaces of unCertainty'.

Within the ensuing performative space, perhaps the most unCertain space from a theoretical perspective, meaning has been both problematized and 'undone'. It is here that fresh signification first unfurls its tendrils, in this shadow area of rearticulation. Further states of alterity may now be initiated—difference that is defined anew as a tangential to normativity, and *not* its apparent opposite.

Fresh meaning-making—released from the discursive frameworks that previously bound signifieds of the body to hackneyed quasi-infinite structures of meaning—is resituated within this now more certain space, certain in its liberation from structuralist hierarchies, certain only of its anarchistic function as representation of

the chaotic signifier newly emerged from the shadow-space of unNameable existential *process*. This may result in the creation of a parallel world of meaning whereby the possibility of renewed ways of seeing the body, outside of the consuming hierarchical system of representation, is actuated (see below for a representative diagram).

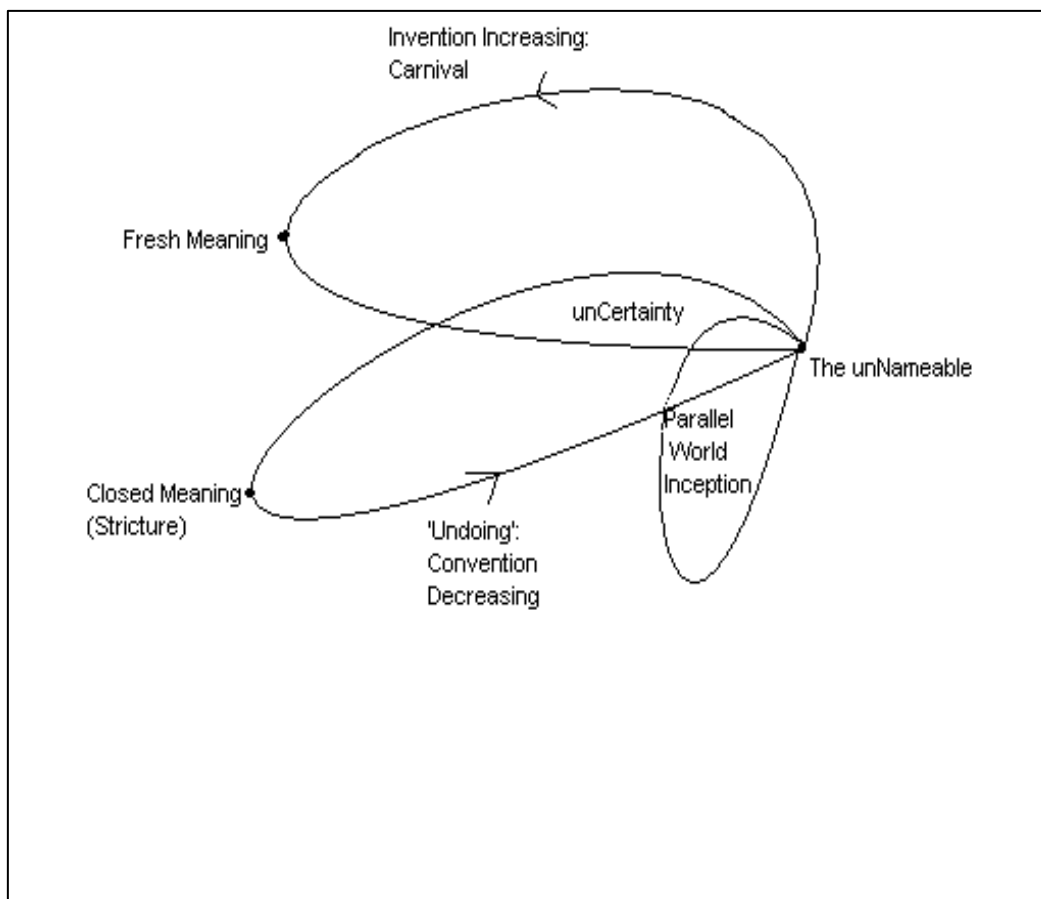


Figure: Diagrammatic Representation of the Reconsideration of Meaning

5. Notes

i See Fredric Jameson's discussion of literary tropes in relation to the semiotic square in Jameson, Fredric. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. London: Methuen, 1981.

ii This will be elaborated on further in direct discussion of the performances.

iii Refer to Derrida's notion of 'presence' here, specifically outlined in *Of Grammatology*.

iv Particular irony exists here regarding the fact that this writing constitutes part of a doctoral thesis about the non-replicable nature of performance art.

v For the purposes of this performance cycle, this concept is signified by the skeletal bird puppet, which emerges at the onset and conclusion of the overt moment of the performative gesture. The puppet surfaces again at a later point in the chapter.

vi It is important to realize that although I set out this series of performance spaces as if they are distinct, in reality their boundaries, undoubtedly, are blurred. I have merely set them out in this way to introduce clarity into the explanation of process. See the diagrammatic representations for a clearer view of the indistinction between Certain and unCertain space.

vii These may be derived from positions of contrary/opposition, contradiction or complementarity arising out of the original strictures isolated in the previous 'space of Certainty'.



Freakshow: Performing Secrets Publicity Poster

Freakshow: Performing Secrets

—*A performance presented by Sarah Forgan in collaboration with Irvine Forgan*

—*Soundtrack by Tom W. Hall*

Performance 1 of the Cycle of Performing the unNameable

The primary focus of my thesis and performance practice, emerging from the spectacle that I have witnessed and researched referencing the hierarchical marginalization of the abnormally marked body, concerns the problematization of these reductive binaries of shame that are rooted in the foundational basis of western thinking. I focus particularly on the constructed alterity of the disabled, animal and criminal body. This first performance of the cycle of performing the unNameable, *Freakshow: Performing Secrets*, refers to the first step of the performative cycle whereby exploration and confrontation of these fallaciously limitless referential sites begins. Overtly, this relates to the dominant representation of the tortured body that is maintained and perpetuated by forces of dominant power in order to maintain this abhorrent spectacle in secret. This occurs within the 'space of Certainty' commonly characterized by reduced, one-dimensional representation and entails the action of isolating dominant problematic ideological structures as manifestations of certain discourses—the rationalization of any barbaric practices that are labelled as ethically and legally sound. The absurdity of their constructedness is exposed by providing a lens that emphasizes their confluence through juxtaposition and excess. Commonly recognized signifiers relating to each 'pole' are bricolated to create a warring, seemingly unified entanglement that is suggestive of an alternate reality which importantly and ironically is the one in which we conduct our lives. The veil of silence and invisibility created and perpetuated through the hierarchical structures is thereby ostensibly alluded to, encouraging the spectator to lift it and see with renewed sight that which lies beneath.

In terms of the performance of the unNameable, *Freakshow: Performing Secrets* focuses on the tension held within the term 'secrecy'—with emphasis on revealing the shame that which is normally kept hidden. The exposure of the tortured body within a small closely inhabited space, reveals a spectacle whose physicality is inescapably tangible, that operates to coerce a sense of complicity between the participants who observe the actions unfolding. Their relationship with actual documented practices of torture is indexed via extrapolation from the performative instances—creating a tacit yet prevailingly disconcerting presence within the space which escalates as the brutalities continue, unabated, in concert with the unfolding claustrophobia and chaos of the gestural moment.

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

A darkling burlesque exploration between the 'unknowns' of chaos and impossibility, Sarah Forgan's interactive performance installations continue to blur the boundaries between the fictive and the 'real' through the interrogation of commonly tolerated representations of the body and what it is to be human, animal, criminal and disabled.

Sometimes we can imagine other worlds.

On rare occasions we are presented with portals to these possibilities.

Sometimes the road through the portal is scarred—

The beauty haunted, confounded, tormented;

Sometimes we wish the

Gruelling was not a nightmare,

Sometimes we wish it was only a dream.

It is easier to remain safe and unprovoked—in some ways it is easier to be blind, to allow the ghosted absences inhering in the echoed silence and shadowed voice to perpetuate—undermining the agency and identity of those hidden by these absences.

Sarah's work utilizes a variety of media and techniques that are both sculptural and performative and that emphasize critical as well as emotional engagement.

FREAKSHOW: PERFORMING SECRETS

Physical Description and Requirements

Freakshow: Performing Secrets is a live performance piece comprising two primary performers interacting with a desired spectatorship approximating 30–40 people. The performance takes place within two tented ‘pod structures’—each roughly 3x4x2m in size—that need to be housed in close proximity to one another. This can be achieved equally successfully within one single space or two adjoining spaces connected by a throughway to so as to allow movement between the structures for the duration of the performance by both performers and spectators. Based on a loosely scripted, unrehearsed framework, the actual outcome of the work is at least partially contingent upon the degree of spectator involvement and is expected to last approximately one hour. This performance debuted in October 2006 as an inclusion in the Dunedin Fringe Festival and, despite the impermanent nature of each performative instance, is a piece that is designed to be performed in a variety of locations. Depending on the time frame and space allocation and its possible relationship to other work exhibited simultaneously, this work has the potential to be performed more than once inside the same space—within a limited time frame.

Each ‘pod’ is constructed from a collapsible metal framework approximately (3x4x2m) in size and covered with sewn fabric drop sheets that can be entered and exited through slits in the fabric. These structures can be erected and disassembled within a time frame of 2 hours if necessary and are easily packed away for transportation and storage purposes. Other sculptural items necessary for the piece include: a cocoon structure roughly 2m long and 1m in diameter; a small cage structure of dimensions 1.5m x 80cm x 80cm; 12 small archive boxes containing objects used in the action unfolding in pod 2; a pin-board; ‘chrysalis’ objects containing shapes to be adhered to the walls during the action unfolding in pod 1; a standing UV light; 12 inspection lamps; a large puppet; a number of chairs; restraint straps; lightweight sculptural shapes representing seated human forms/profiles.

Crucial to both the action and the interpretation of the performance are a series of carefully timed prompts comprised of a cycle of changing light—through the operation of spotlights and ultraviolet lights—and auditory signals—both of which can be easily operated by a technician. Access to the requisite power points is therefore needed to set up a simple operational base for the provision of these elements of the performance.

Conceptual Outline

Freakshow: Performing Secrets occurs in a darkened room with high ceiling space, dimly lit with a series of blue inspection lights. The pods are situated in close proximity to one another; the exit of pod 1 is aligned with the entrance of pod 2—they are divided by a self-enclosed circle demarcated by chairs. As the spectators arrive, they are ushered in and directed to pod 1, which is entered through a series of slits cut into the fabric covering the pod.

Note: Since only one pod is active at a time, the other remains hidden—invisibly pitch black through lack of illumination. When the spectators are moving between the structures, only the dividing space is illuminated through stark spotlights pointing upwards from the ground.

Pod 1

Enclosed within this cloaked ‘space of possibility’ hang a variety of objects, most notably six dangling chrysalides clutching a tangle of coloured shapes that glow with subdued effervescence under the UV illumination. Situated in the space between pod 1 and 2 behind the exit slits of the pod, is a large cocoon where performer1 (P1) lays waiting, hidden from view.

From within, the pod is inky-dim, the only light radiating, diffuse, from the methylated purple of ultra-violet light which is easily absorbed into the black felting that lines the walls of the pod. As the spectator enters, they too melt into the indigo interior, the light highlighting anything white or pastel with an eerie otherworldly glow that vacillates in different shades of purple-rinsed neon. This creates a rather bizarre effect since the eyeballs, teeth and other arbitrary fragments of the body dazzle in the otherwise velvet blackness.

At this point that there is sufficient illumination to see, the spectator becomes aware of a large bone-white skeletal bird-puppet weaving an undulating pattern above and between the viewers as it flies ghostly through the space, its crisp white skull and spectral feathers highlighted as it circles the pod, silent except for its ethereal harmonic accompaniment. The action in this pod—initiated through the emergence of P1 from the cocoon, the puppeteering of P2 operating the skeletal bird puppetⁱ and the concurrent musicalⁱⁱ and lighting cues lasts ten to fifteen minutes, and encourages the observer to participate in the unfolding of non-sequential, interactive meaning in this other-worldly space that is childlike—yet dark—innocent, yet gleaned from those marginalized through ideologies of perfection. It is the secreted, silenced identities of those inhabiting these liminal areas that complicate and overturn simplistic dualisms that pit the constructed subordinate body, here of the animal, disabled and criminal, against its dominant constructed superior—whose visibility is ubiquitous and whose very existence, through its perfection, is impossible. The shapes resemble the felt pieces that might be

used in a children's game where a narrative, story or idea is built up by placing a combination of cut-outs in a variety of positions so that they interact and begin to construct layers of meaning through their chosen proximity and placing. Their forms are hardly conventional—on closer inspection they reveal themselves as mutations, freak-forms that are simultaneously fictive, imaginary and originary—yet derived from actual documented evidenceⁱⁱⁱ. Initiated through the assemblage of these signs, the element of surprise does not necessarily arise from their mutations but rather at the realization that they are part of our world—our reality—and that it is only through the perpetuation of their fragmentation and disassociation that the constructed nature of their existence is allowed to continue unchallenged. The shapes begin to form a communion that is as concatenated as it is whimsical, allowing for multiple significations—innumerable worlds within worlds—to begin articulating. Through the utilization of masks, puppets and soft sculpture the process of creation is inclusive of both the space and the audience, encouraging the formation of a heterogeneous, interactive entanglement of meaning production. Although this pod appears to have a childlike and enchanted atmosphere, the deceptiveness inhering in the display of the othered body is contained within the coloured shapes referencing indices of the insidious forces controlling the display of the othered body—the reality of which are kept as secrets washed over with the lies of cultural egalitarianism.

Moving Between the Pods

As the UV light within pod 1 fades to black, the acrid yellow floor lights within the space between the pods come alive, encouraging the audience to negotiate the throughway to the pod 2, the pod of chaos. This change in lighting is accompanied with a simultaneous alteration in sound, emphasizing the crucial indexical role of light and sound to the performative process. This space is contained within a small circle of chairs whose placement and character resemble devices of restraint and death. This is not realistically portrayed but rather, is suggested at. The circle completely encloses the entrances between the pods and acts to structurally compel the spectators to move into pod 2. A few of the chairs contain forms consisting of bundles of cloth and cardboard cut-outs that represent slumped human forms which, through the shadow play created through the floor lights, appear to observe the spectators as they move between these areas. The sense of foreboding is further enhanced through the gradual descent of a row of nooses from a beam that is lowered from above.

Pod 2

Lined with bright red fabric and various government insignia, the intensity of this area is emphasized by the harsh yellow spotlight reflecting off the steel and stark spare yawn of the space. P1 and P2, masked anew, stand on either side of a vertical centrally placed cage with a steel gate, latch and walls of chicken wire, which lends it an air of grim severity. Both performers are attired in a collection of roughly pinned rags of discoloured fabric

that reference a bricolage of patchwork bandages variously, erratically concealing and revealing disjunctive surfaces of their bodies. These windows and shades are non-uniform, and reveal the body as it is—no attempt is made to present the flesh in a pleasing or flattering way yet nor is it made to look grotesque—grazes, bruises, scars, hair, skin, reside without elaboration as flaw or asset. P1 wears a full donkey mask that exists in dialogue with the impending action of the pod and, through implication, with the long-standing myth that conflates this animal with ignorance. P2 wears a plain white-out mask made of gauze bandaging—indexing the structures employed to rape the identity of the prisoner effected through the practices of torture—the muting of the voice of the Other and hence, the truths of atrocity kept shadowed through forces of disciplinary power^{iv}. They stand quietly rigid, staring ahead into the pod that is filling with its transiting co-habitants. A cork pin-board imaged with a donkey's outline maintains a central feature of this oppressive environment, its associations with the mirth of child's play lending it a darkly comedic air—an abandoned and distorted relic of a ghosted carnival. It is gridlocked as a demarcated map—each area referencing an instance of prisoner torture and its corresponding prisoner number that is coordinated to the numbered black boxes lining the walls of the pod. The tail of the donkey hangs, pinned to one corner of the board.

Each enclosed zone of the donkey represents the creation of an instance of torture as embodied spectacle, exposing an entanglement of secrets made manifest through the chance-patterning of signifiers drawn from the amalgamated iconographies held within the framework of the action of pinning the tale/tail on the instantial donkey. As the action unfolds the white-blanked performers grapple opposing positions of subordination and superiority exemplified through the axes of polarized extremity. Layered with and alternately layering the series of prisoner numbers and torture indices, they become the reification of a farcical conglomeration—a metonymical convocation of numbers and performing objects that reject the notion of purity that informs the idealized axis of oppositional subjectivity and objectivity. The aesthetic signifiers drawn from a multiplicity of sources excised from current ideological frameworks are rearticulated within this pod of chaos, creating a blended heterogeneity of horror—absurd in its excess, yet terrifying in its direct life-connection with the reality of its continued existence as fragmentations bled from the dominant—and thereby implicitly sanctioned—ideological frameworks that maintain the existence these of oppositions^v.

The masked, marked, performer is the breathing object residing in simplistic opposition to the subject fulfilling its task of administering the method of torture—slowly, dispassionately he fulfils his role as implementer of the imperatives set by those beyond sight—beyond hearing—free of admonishment, their reprehensibility falls outside of reification. Unlike their victims and perhaps because of them, they target objects in the 'blameworthy', outlining their crimes, delineating their punishment. Far from attempting a simplistic appropriation of these atrocities that are necessarily removed from the performer's experience, this clockwork ritualized unfolding is knowingly ironical. It operates as an intentional dark burlesque of the blanket absorption of these horrors by societies saturated in consumerism and globalized media, characterized by the hyperreal image and cultural responses that materialize as apathy, disinterest and neutralization—thereby occupying the position of zero on the scale of opposition upon which these crimes are birthed. The performative process becomes relentless in its barrage of repetition, each carnivalesque tail-pinning initiating another confluence of signifiers—another chaotic enactment of the excesses—the silenced secrets of criminal torture. During this process the audience is encouraged to participate on the levels of both physical and conceptual

engagement^{vi}, though the mere presence of others in this space—those who have *chosen* to be here—contribute to the re-inscription of meaning outside of the claustrophobia of reduction informing the piece. Again, it is the presence of the puppet and the still performing objects—operating as multifaceted signifiers—that catalyze the closure of action, that offer themselves as traces; mementos that present the possibility of alternative re-inscriptions from those of which they were birthed.

Freakshow:
Performing Secrets
ACTION SCRIPT

Right: Lighting for pod
transition; Below: Pod set up



Freakshow: *Performing
Secrets*

Note: This script is written on the assumption that the technical (sound and lighting) cues are to be controlled manually. The reason for this is that should one of the three stages (particularly stage 1) require premature conclusion, the sound and lighting can be accordingly adjusted. If the venue allows for the lighting and sound to be automatically cued, a solution—such as a 30 second warning siren^{vii}—will have to be found that alerts the performers to the imminent changes between stages of the performance. Potentially this might work very

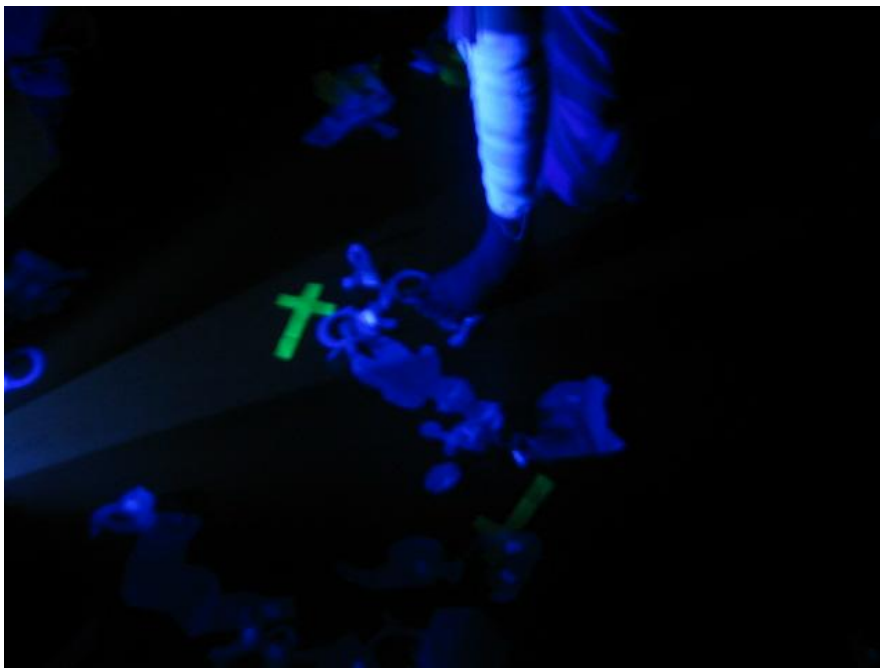
well and the precautions only really apply to the timing of the end of stage 1 since the timing of stage 2 is highly predictable and stage 3 can be programmed to run on repeat and then cut dead at the conclusion of the performance, without any fuss.

Prelude to the Performance

Freakshow: Performing Secrets occurs in a darkened room with high ceiling space, dimly lit with a series of blue inspection lights. The pods are situated in close proximity to one another, the exit of pod 1 aligned with the entrance of pod 2—and are divided by a self-enclosed circle demarcated by chairs. As the spectators arrive, they are ushered in and directed to pod 1, which is entered through a series of slits cut into the fabric covering the pod.

Note: Since only one pod is active at a time, the other remains hidden—invisibly pitch black through lack of illumination. When the spectators are moving between the structures, the dividing space and pod 2 are illuminated through stark spotlights.

PERFORMANCE ACTION POD 1



**Left: Moth Releases
Chrysalis Contents**

Sculptural Placement

Pod 1 is lined with heavy black fabric. Hanging from the wire frame of the pod dangle six chrysalis shaped nets tied with draw-string. The interior of the pod is adorned with a variety of items such as drainage devices and dressings. Situated in the space between pod 1 and 2, behind the exit slits of the pod is a large cocoon, where P1 lays waiting inside this structure, hidden from view. The pod is dimly lit with a UV light whose intensity increases to welcome the arriving spectators.

TECHNICIAN:

When pod 1 is filled with spectators, the technician begins playing TRACK 1 of the *Freakshow* soundtrack—this is approximately 20 minutes in length. Simultaneous to the onset of the music the dimmer on the spotlight is slowly turned up, increasing the intensity of the UV light. The music will play and the intensity of the light will increase for 2–3 minutes before the entrance of P1—to shorten the performance time of pod 1 and draw the spectators within. After the track has been playing for roughly 17 minutes, the black bleeping siren is sounded for about 30 seconds to alert P1 to prepare to exit pod 1. As soon as track 1 ends, the light in pod 1 is switched off immediately

PUPPETEER (P2):

Two minutes after the music begins, P2 enters the pod and begins manoeuvring the skeletal bird puppet. He wears white bandages and a white face mask covered in plaster and muslin. He enters from the exit slit of pod 1 and begins weaving through and around the spectators in the pod. The puppet is held aloft with the right arm whilst the left arm controls the flapping wings. If possible, P2 varies the position of the puppet by lowering and raising his arm and moving it laterally. This action occurs for 2-5 minutes and precedes the entrance of P1 by approximately 2 minutes. P2 then brings the bird to rest and quietly exits pod 1, placing the puppet in a designated hidden space in pod 2.

MOTH (P1):

Once track 1 has been playing for a few minutes and the puppet is circling pod 1, P1 emerges from the cocoon. She, too, is costumed in white bandages. Fabric is attached to her arms and shoulders that loosely resembles the wings of the Death's Head Moth. She wears a mask whose frontal design also emulates this insect. She enters pod 1 through the mouth of a large cocoon that is situated at a slit in the side wall of the pod. She moves in a slow trance-like, ethereal 'dance', gliding between the spectators. Her action consists of opening the chrysalis nets over a period of 15 minutes, releasing a multitude of white fabric shapes that glow fiercely beneath the UV light—that fall all about the pod space, over and between the spectators. She retrieves these shapes and randomly attaches them to spots on the interior walls of the pod, her actions encouraging the spectators to

participate in the creation of a rather darkly sardonic ‘narrative’. After a time, the dance of the moth begins to slow—to stultify in time with the changing tone of the music. This slowly devolving movement continues until just prior to the music’s rather abrupt end. The performer exits the pod through the exit slits at the back and moves to pod 2 —where she removes her moth attire. This is closely followed with pod 1 being reduced to almost complete darkness.

PERFORMANCE ACTION: MOVING BETWEEN THE PODS

Sculptural Placement

This space is contained within a small circle of chairs whose placement and character resemble devices of restraint and death. This is not realistically portrayed but rather, is suggested at. The circle completely encloses the entrances between the pods and acts to structurally compel the spectators to move into pod 2. A few of the chairs contain forms consisting of bundles of cloth and cardboard cut-outs that represent slumped human figures which, through the shadow play created through the floor lights, appear to observe the spectators as they move between these areas.

TECHNICIAN:

As the UV light within pod 1 fades to black, the acrid yellow floor lights within the space between the pods come alive, encouraging the audience to negotiate the thoroughway to the pod 2, the pod of Chaos. Soon after, the spotlights in pod 2 are switched on to encourage the spectators to move to pod 2.

Track 2 of the *Freakshow* soundtrack is played as the lights are switched on. This lasts approximately 5 minutes and consists of a similar melody to track 1 in a more minor key overlaid with the sounds of militant marching. The sense of foreboding is further enhanced through the gradual descent of a row of nooses from a beam that is lowered from above. Pod 1 remains dark for the rest of the performance.

P2:

Whilst still attired in white bandaging and blanking mask, P2 moves swiftly with controlled purpose to pod 2 and waits, silent, reticent, on the far side of the centrally placed carceral structure (cage). He stares ahead, his masked face free of emotion.

P1:

Having removed her moth attire within pod 2, P1 now wears a donkey mask and stands on the side of the centrally placed cage nearest the adjacent structure that bears a large pin-board covered in a donkey-map. She stands quietly rigid, staring ahead into the pod that is filling with the transiting spectators.

Below: Tableau Upon Entering Pod 2



PERFORMANCE ACTION POD 2

Sculptural Placement

Pod 2, lined with bright red fabric and decorated with various military insignia, is lit from within with a harsh glaring spotlight. A vertical, centrally placed cage with an iron gate and latch and walls of chicken wire is flanked by a board bearing the image of a large, simplified, child-like outline of a donkey—that is,

the gridlocked donkey-map pin-board used to reference each instance of torture. The tail of the donkey hangs, pinned to one corner of the board. The pod is lined with twelve identical black boxes differentiated only by a prisoner number that corresponds to one of the prisoner-territories of the donkey. Each box contains a collection of instruments of torture that correlate to the donkey-map—and a mask. An alarm clock is placed beside the cage. A white sheet lies folded behind the cage.

TECHNICIAN:

Once track 2 has ended, track 3 of the soundtrack follows immediately. **Note:** If many of the spectators are still in the process of moving between the pods, rather than repeating track 2 until the pod is filled, it is easier to allow track 3 to begin playing again since it should, for all intents and purposes, go unnoticed. By allowing track 3 to cycle, one avoids the sound being lost drastically early if the previous stage is staggered. Since the lights in pod 2 have already been switched on shortly after the action in pod 1 has ended, no lighting adjustments are made at this time.

After track 3 has been stopped (it may well cycle for another round), ALL lights must be extinguished for roughly one to two minutes to allow P2 to retrieve the bird puppet and to allow P1 to lie beneath the white sheet before the lights are turned back on. This marks the end of the role of the technician in the performance.

P1:

Performer 1 either plays or is played by the mechanism of the donkey-map and the catalyzing correlative action¹. This is true for both performers other than the beginning sequence which is already outlined—and the final action of the performance.

Within the 2 to 3 minutes before the end of track 3 of the *Freakshow* soundtrack, the lights are extinguished. During this time of darkness P1 abruptly ceases the action of the torture instance being referenced (this may require assistance from P2) and retrieves the white sheet situated behind the cage. She lies down on the ground in front of the cage and, covering her entire form with the sheet, lies inert beneath it. This marks the end of her action within pod 2 and in the performance.

P2:

Once the pod has filled with the transiting spectators, P2 leads P1 to the donkey image where he begins to spin her round in a slowly determined ritualized manner. After she has been sufficiently disorientated, performer 2 hands her a donkey's tail attached to a pin and directs her towards the donkey-map of torture, covering her masked eyes with his other hand. Performer 1 flailingly, in her dizzying, pins the tail to the board, thereby pinpointing a specific instance of torture whose indices are referenced and contained within one of the numbered boxes. P2 proceeds to the corresponding numbered box that contains the indices to the specified instance of barbarism. He then proceeds to empty the contents of the specified 'torture box', setting the alarm to roughly 4 minutes^{viii}.

Within 2 to 3 minutes within the end of track 3 of the *Freakshow* soundtrack, the lights are extinguished. During this time of darkness P2 abruptly ceases the action of the torture instance being referenced (this may require assistance from P1) and retrieves the skeletal bird puppet and white blanking mask. When the

lights illuminate the space of pod 2 once more, P2, still masked, proceeds to 'fly' the puppet, weaving between the spectators and over the inanimate form of P1 lying beneath the white sheet. This marks the end of his action within pod 2.



Left: Pinning the Tail Interchange

¹ Refer to **The Instances** and **Performer Interchangeability** below

Performer Interchangeability

Other than the initial action, which P1 begins by pinning the tail on the donkey, the roles of P1 and P2 are interchangeable. This is effected through the device of a simple symbolic key. The grid-lined donkey is split up into 10 sections, which are arbitrarily assigned to each performer, preferably through interaction with a third performer and/or the audience. Whenever a new tail-pinning action is initiated, the implementing performer that hands the other the tail to pin to the board, views the choice. If the new instance is to be applied to the current receiver, the implementing performer continues to mete out the next instance. If, however, the pinning performer has chosen an area pertaining to her partner, that performer lets out a solitary cry, and waits for her to remove his mask and stands—hiding his exposed face—dejectedly awaiting the torturous action he has been allocated. This mechanism is designed to counter the possibility of inferring a hierarchical relationship between P1 and P2—necessarily informed through reference to their identities outside of the performance. The masks and other devices utilized throughout are designed to efface subjectivity in order to reference the violent theft of identity inhering in the practice of prisoner incarceration and torture.

The Instances of Torture: A Series of Ritualized Actions in No Particular Order

Ψ The alarm goes off. After P2 has switched it off he releases P1 from her previous position of torture and leads her back to the pin-board where she is spun around, ritualistically, 3 times before he places the donkey's tail once more in her hand, covering her eyes and pointing her in the direction of the board. After her 'choice' is made, the corresponding torture technique is administered in a mechanized manner—again, the action is ritualistic, ordered and focused—devoid of 'extraneous' emotion^{ix}.

Bear Bile Farming

The appropriate numbered box is opened. Whilst P1 stands waiting, blinded and disorientated in a subdued pose, P2 removes the props. P2 sets the alarm. He places the bear mask over her face. He attaches the drainage device to her body—the fur patch is placed over the abdomen in the region of the liver/gall bladder and the pipe, attached to a glass decanter, is hooked outside the cage. P1 is shoved into the carceral structure and the door is closed, where she remains until the alarm rings. During this time P1 exhibits signs of deep distress i.e. violent shaking the head, rocking from side to side, hitting out against the bars. P2 may also wrap chains around the cage if there is time.

Continue with Ψ

Broiler Chicken Farming

The appropriate numbered box is opened. Whilst P1 stands waiting, blinded and disorientated in a subdued pose, P2 removes the props. P2 sets the alarm. He places the chicken mask over her face. A pair of broken, tumoured chicken legs is hooked to her waist. Her beak is removed and a funnel is pushed down the hole and thick stodgy liquid is chugged into her throat. P1 is shoved into the carceral structure and the door is closed, where she remains until the alarm rings. During this time P1 exhibits signs of deep distress i.e. pecking motions are made at the sides of the cage and the floor. She tries to move, to turn, but is unable to. She presses up against the bars; she pecks at ghosted grain on the ground.



Continue with Ψ

**Left: Vivisection
Enactment**

Derision and Subjugation of those marked as ‘Disabled and ‘Animal’

The appropriate numbered box is opened. Whilst P1 stands waiting, blinded and disorientated in a subdued pose, P2 removes the props. P2 sets the alarm. The monkey mask is placed over the face of P1 and black sunglasses—such as a visually impaired person might wear—are placed over her eyes. Thereafter he pushes her to the ground, where she sits and waits for him to pass her some coloured balls and a children’s game where variously shaped pieces are slotted into correspondingly shaped holes. P1 attempts to juggle the balls and play the game, struggling due to her severely limited sight whilst P2 walks slowly up and down and applauds by shaking an idiotic clapping device made of plastic hands, cajoling the audience to join in the applause at her efforts.

Continue with Ψ

Medical Vivisection

The appropriate numbered box is opened. Whilst P1 stands waiting, blinded and disorientated in a subdued pose, P2 removes the props. P2 sets the alarm. He removes a doctor's coat and mask and put them on. The kitten mask is placed over the face of P1. She is restrained with leather straps and made to lie down/a hooked device is placed around her neck and she is forcibly coerced to lie down. P2 'injects' her with a syringe in her throat. Her legs tremble then collapse as dead weights under her—she is paralyzed from the waist down. She drags herself along the ground by her arms amongst the bystanders.

Continue with Ψ



**Left: Medicalised
Torture**

The Body as Medicalized Object

The appropriate numbered box is opened. Whilst P1 stands waiting, blinded and disorientated in a subdued pose, P2 removes the props. P2 sets the alarm. The sex-kitten mask is placed over the face of P1. P1 begins to unwind the bandaging covering her legs, stopping at knee height. Once this is complete, P2 removes a pair of high heels and ties them on to the feet of P1. He hands her a mini skirt to put on. He places a cheap "princess wig and hat" on her head and places a tacky wand in her hand. He smears red lipstick and blusher in a garish fashion on her face and cheeks. She walks up and down the pod, (with the aid of a walking stick with a human foot attached to it) struggling in her absurd outfit—masquerading suave sexy appeal—thereby creating a grotesque parody of the idealized female form as object of desire. While she is performing this action, P2 aims and clicks a camera at the object of his gaze^x.

Continue with Ψ

Black Deaths in Custody:

Genocide of Australian Aborigines



Above: The Breaking of Biko

The appropriate numbered box is opened. Whilst P1 stands waiting, blinded and disorientated in a subdued pose, P2 removes the props. P2 sets the alarm. The mask is placed over the face of P1. P2 cuffs the feet of P1. She lays down and he covers her with a dirty blanket and places a bible and a hangman's noose on top of her inert form. P2 stands aside. P1 'awakes' and places the hangman's noose, tightened, around her neck and stands, distending the loose end to emulate the tension of a rope hanging from a ceiling. P1 holds the bible in her other hand.

Continue with Ψ

Murder of Steve Biko Whilst Illegally Incarcerated During Apartheid South Africa

The appropriate numbered box is opened. Whilst P1 stands waiting, blinded and disorientated in a subdued pose, P2 removes the props. P2 sets the alarm. The mask is placed over the face of P1. She is laid beneath a sheet, her mask still visible. P2 stands retrieves a covered container filled with blood-red liquid and steps on to a box placed in front of P1. He slowly lifts the container above his head and after a minute or two of holding it above his head, allows it to slip from his hands—crashing with a tremendous thud—to the ground.

Continue with Ψ



**Left: The Witch
Faces her Fate**

Genocide of Witches/Inquisition

The appropriate numbered box is opened. Whilst P1 stands waiting, blinded and disorientated in a subdued pose, P2 removes the props. P2 sets the alarm. The mask is placed over the face of P1. She is also given a Witch's hat. Then P2 retrieves string from the box and proceeds to bind the thumbs and toes of P1 cross-tied. P2 picks up a packet of long sharp pins and pricks P1 about her body, to test whether she is numb in some areas and the pins pricks are anaesthetized—the sign of a blood-Witch. P2 completes the action by holding P1 at the scruff of the back of her neck and repeatedly dunking her head into a bucket of water.

Continue with Ψ



**Left: Witch Dunking as
Forced Confession**

The Atrocities of Abu Ghraib

The appropriate numbered box is opened. Whilst P1 stands waiting, blinded and disorientated in a subdued pose, P2 removes the props. P2 sets the alarm. Instead of the mask being placed over the face of P1, her head is completely enclosed within a black pointed hood—devoid of breathing holes. She is made to stand on a box in front of the carceral structure, her hands spread at about 60° to the ground.

Continue with Ψ

Eco-Terrorism—The Bill Rodgers Case: Murder Framed as Suicide

The appropriate numbered box is opened. Whilst P1 stands waiting, blinded and disorientated in a subdued pose, P2 removes the props. P2 sets the alarm. In place of the mask being placed over the face of P1, her head is completely enclosed within a plastic bag—devoid of breathing holes. P2 places a sash over the shoulder of P1—it reads “ECO-TERRORIST”.

Continue with Ψ



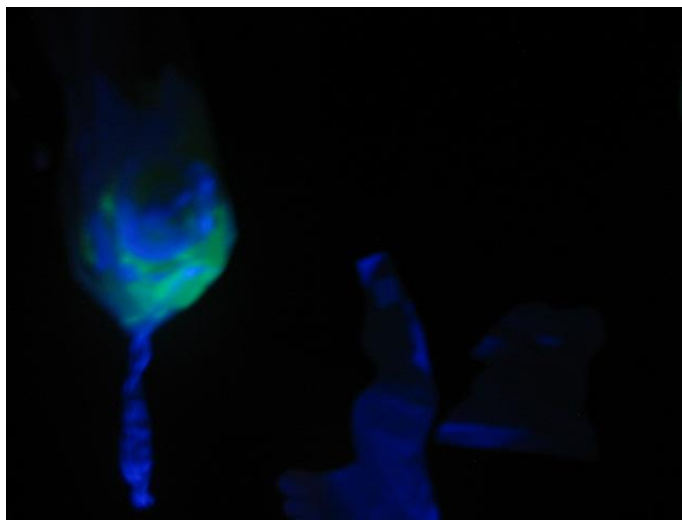
Left: Eco-Terrorist—and Proud!

Anecdotes and Reflections

It remains challenging to ‘sufficiently’ reflect on the workings of a performance whose ephemeral nature counters the act of documentation for the purposes of posterity. The nature of the performance, its very ontology, denies a reified and fixed meaning, its articulations emerging out of the experience of all of those who produce its meaning within the shared moment of conscious experience. The variable performances of this cycle of the unNameable, whose impressions fluctuate within the subjectivity of the performer, emerge as a system of memories whose relationship is not necessarily linear or completely describable. In fact to do so would suggest at a fixity of meaning and representation emerging from a privileged point of creative and conceptual authority. Rather, in keeping with the metonymy of the work, I focus on the effects that emerge out of the memories of the experience and responses to the work and the atmosphere that described the space of the gestural moment. This is particularly relevant to gain an understanding of *Freakshow*. I have chosen, therefore, to place a series of anecdotal fragments as accompaniments, with considered reference, to the scripts and conceptual outlines I have provided—so as to give an experiential insight into this exploration of dreamscapes and the nightmares of torture, from the point of view of the embodied subject.

Performing the Moth: Pod 1—Dreamscape

Emerging from the cocoon the moth was met with a sense of awe. Her winged arms leading the dance, she lost awareness of the norms punctuating the world she had exited. Her feet no longer felt the hard edges of ground against the bones of her foot, her movements gliding as softy silver as faery dust beneath the throbbing orbs of the otherworldly pod—her gifted dreamscape in the present tense of (the) unfolding smiles and unspoken sharing of a narrative that weaved its weft in multiple strands between, through and around the closely nestled bodies of the shared storytellers.



Left: Unreleased Chrysalis

As the chrysalises allowed the jumbled indexes of their stories release, palms eagerly opened to receive the signs constructed from the social network that bears them—that they inscribe, erase and articulate in innumerable variables both subtly nuanced and grotesquely extreme. There emerged a pointed, accepted, waxing willingness to participate, to break through the wall separating the constructed dichotomy of prescriptive performer and evasive observer. As the moth slipped between the various subjectivities absorbed into this possible world, sliding between the softly shuffling shapes, she watched their glowing imagery rapidly burlesque—inscribing the velvet black of the pod with their soft sheer fantastical glow. Belying their content as signifiers of pain, cruelty and torture the forms materialized in haphazard articulation, each bricolage without beginning or end—shifting its meaning as quickly as it is reinscribed in relation to other shapes and new subjectivities—the fairytale travesty of innocence and horror implemented within the fractured present; through the necessary hand of the participant.



Left: Moth Showing Wing Detail

This anecdote reflects the workings of meaning as it evolves in the performative moment, emphasizing, particularly, the breakdown of the hierarchy of spectator and performer—the willingness to become

involved was immediate and exceeded expectation, of particular note was the enjoyment sharing the objects indexing the concepts of incarceration that fell from the chrysalises.

Hands and eyes were joined beneath the ultraviolet glow whilst the puppet of the unNameable swirled through the space. This initiated the formation of an idea that I developed in the later works, that is, the need for the addition of physical indices gifted to the participants in retrospective consideration of their willingness to participate. This, I thought, would create a balance regarding their willingness to ‘give back’ when choosing to participate in the performance.

Moving Between the Pods: In Transit within the Space of Uncertainty

The atmosphere of enchantment prevailing in pod 1—the pod of possibility—is now tinged with the darkly sombre gloom beckoning from pod 2—the space of imminent chaos. As the sound of militant marching interspersed with the brooding incessancy of the impending unknown develops in this portal space, its brooding is etched in uncertain anticipation of the inarticulable movement towards chaos and the unNameable. The moth of pod 1 has evanesced and is replaced, within this blood-red space, with the grotesquerie often associated with human-animal amalgamation. Half-blind staring through unseeing black ass eyes, her feet bare pads hard against the ground, her body red-smoulder vulnerable held within a patch-worked matrix of bandage rags, the skin cold, fragile, exposed in odd fleshy fragments amidst the disordered bandaging. She flanks the left side of the cage of cold steel bars and heavy chains—inert, blank, and focussed. To the right of the structure lurks another figure, his faceless mask betraying no emotion, stock-still he stands, frozen, comprising the stance of a living being who has lost his identity. The ass is aware of the enduring eagerness of those in attendance—the willingness to invest in the creation of meaning

evidenced through the dispersed weaving play of their hands with the chrysalis signifiers, referencing—in childlike simplicity—reified tokens of the irreducible experience of torture. Paradoxically, some still hold these simplified paper parodies—keepsakes curled into their palms and stuffed hurriedly into their pockets—and the ass grins unseen behind and within her grotesquerie at the irony of their coveting of the images which were never hers to own, in gratitude at their thirst for involvement in this pod of possibility.

The mood has changed significantly here, though the spectators, for the most part, remained charmed in memory of the dream space they had recently vacated. Here, the artist constructs an alternate reality yet leaves the space for the possibility—the extent and manner of involvement open. Meaning, is preparing to expose itself, then rupture within the closely knit space, anticipating the response it surely must elicit.

The following selection of anecdotes exemplifies the chaos of action, and perception located in the subjectivities of the participants, particularly evidenced in the two primary performers. It indicates a disruption of the visual, conceptual, ideological and affective space as the darkly sardonic game of pin-the-tail-on-the-donkey unfolds. As the unfolding gesture amalgamated into an ongoing see-saw of climax and its negation, seemingly without end, the spectators became increasingly interpolated into the implications of brutality and lack of accountability referenced with such emphasis within the enclosed space. Some people felt compelled to leave, some began to weep. Others became physically involved and assisted in the relentless ritual of the increasingly disoriented performative pair, who were exhibiting obvious signs of exhaustion. The atmosphere that was generated within this space of the unNameable is impossible to replicate. It is my hope that the following anecdotes allow some degree of insight into that poignant and painful space.

Moving Torture: Pod 2nd

Amidst the ominous fresh blade-scuttle hinge seesaw clanging march, the ass is calm, resigned to her lot in the hapless quest to locate her own rump (body) so as to reattach her tail—she is aware of the rules. Her vision severely stunted, her eyes piece together experience in fragmental blur snippets of time, each segment loosely spaced splices in unanticipated time. Clumsily her stiffened limbs follow the lead of the bandaged hand that guides her, spins her thrice and places the taunt of her tail in her hand bidding her to continue the fruitless search to locate the place of severance—to realign the amputation with its estranged stump. Once contact is made a cry of anguish rings out, filled with remorse—the signal of her temporal escape and wending along the path of the oppressor.

Change of Voice: Murder of Steve Biko (as oppressor)

Swathed in off-white bandages that enclose their secrets--shame, hate, fear, malice mean nothing--no thing is disclosed behind her gauzed veil of protection as she purposefully locates the graven repository of tell-tale indices, removing the mock tokens of lost subjectivity, paradoxically instantiated with a number signalling historical placement in linear time. Wearing the mask of agency purporting suicide he becomes the irrecoverable--an innocent man murdered quietly, left to die alone amidst a midden of lies. Those in attendance watch, mute, shrinking back absorbed whilst absorbing the flesh-relics as his skull is crushed and hidden beneath the closure of the white sheet, (their) faces now grim but still inert--awaiting, perhaps, redemption from devastation. Only a fragment of time but she remembers the farce of continuity as the piercing shrill of the alarm shatters the moment; forever lost except as intangible signification to be unravelled if only that fragment could be caught again; grasped, reconceived, prevented^{xii}.

Change of Voice: Vivisection (as oppressed)

Hish-hash bandages, washed with red he seeks the stump in blind dizzy concentration--a silent see-sawing pause--and with lamented resignation, head slumped, she awaits the face of the nameless fur-slicked skin-stripped cat. All around eyes attend each painful move to constrain her in his new white slate-clean mask of mummified nobody. Heavy cold hook finger yanking the fragile neck, fleshy human-paws subdued, her jaw pried she gags as wire thin sharps numb her maw frozen wide. Fruitless bracing against bars, defiant duck knocks the hand filled with miraged miracles for those with no fur and two paws--those whose bodies reject what hers accepts--eyes glued against their rims as the glass shatters and showers the shamed ceremony. Reminded of the danger of mere observation, some are torn from their trance and step into the hallowed space of the imaginary wall dividing realism and reality. Casting the glass from beneath the heels of the pair caught in the miasma of chaos, some embrace the lack of control, the anarchic spark and through *tending* break with submissive attendance, initiating conceptual engagement into the realm of doing--of stating, of staking a claim.

Change of Voice: The Atrocities of Abu Ghraib (as oppressed)

Heels still caked in chemical powder, (it is) with resigned acknowledgement she bows her head for the clinical removal of the cat--temples scraped in

the flurry--crimson droplets oozing down cheekbones into the nameless hood of the terrorist. Breathing slowed, stilted eyes slowly absorbing red she clammers her footing and mounts the scrapheap podium of infamy, yielding beneath the guiding hand all is dull, wrists twisted ignominiously left, back and through the stronger leg and held--poised in discomfort as the blood begins to rush to the stultified crown. And then the wait. Interminable repetition of vacated swing cringing on its hinges, throat closing as the nostrils fill with the disappointment of thick black cling. It is *their* breathing, rising and falling in close moist clouds, guiding her through--their anticipation as fraught with the dichotomy of nothing and everything. The moment is, can only be, hers.

Change of Voice: Xenotransplantation^{xiii} (as oppressor)



Above: Pig/Human Xenotransplantation Re-enactment of Torture

Searching in a kaleidoscope of yellow-red plastic heat, the cry, this time, bears his incremental weariness and hers, silent, relieved; hands hold the slouched chin and hot cheeks--her shoulders crack straight as he becomes the sow. Incessant clanging and her soles ache as she grapples his face but still it sits, squashed, skewed, his greying hair mimicking eyelashes and soft bridge exposed where the snout should hang. Time ticks and she slides through powdered glass and slick glue mulch, feverishly searching for his faceless number--he, the sow with the baboon heart. Their eyes boring holes in the fabric where the pins seek entrance--heavy lime-pink-neon grotesque,

his trotters swing from his chest in absurded metronomic time with marching ghosts. Thick, swollen human hands forced to his waist and tied, mimicking sow teats and tourniquet—he stands vital, absurd, surreal; snout grimacing in the blood-hot heat.

Change of Voice: Eco-Terrorism (as oppressed)

Shrill alarm piercing the intermittent spaces between the clanging grind, the blank torturer releases his bonds amidst the swirl of blood and glass—blue-jean man at her feet, side-sweeping the offending shards—they turn and tramp in unison to the still-smiling donkey. His hand searching for x-pitch-black joke as he hones the pin to the muzzle tip—and the cry, weary now, low, guttural as she lowers her head in preparation. Swinging swerves in clumsy circles he rasps in his flailing grasps for her elusive carceral index. Heavy hands close around the box gifted through the fraught offer of a girl with red hair, dreads coiling over the edges of the lid of secrets. Fresh-face in her crisp suit of null, she feels the plastic lower its suffocating veil over her vulnerability as she becomes a man out of time, lost in his passing, patient, benign, his compassion overrun with the desire to die when he fought so hard for equality amongst the sentient—for those whose voicelessness became their demise. Her chest rising in quick desperate breaths, limbs heavy in their tedious starvation, suffocation lifts as she is honoured with the mask that smirks at the silence of his death-blanked, receiving the award-shimmer-green sash amongst the nervous tittering of their disbelief. Floored, prostrate, the laughter dies in time with the groaning rust of the saw.

Change of Voice: Bear Bile Farming (as oppressor and the change)

Scuttering through the ghosted remains of the past re-present-ed, pushing up against the weight of his exhaustion—a gaping space now where they once stood in silent enchantment—shattered as harshly as the segments that strung them together were woven—the sound now a grating maw as central to scorn as the game that plays them. Urgency and helplessness conjoined, the pod seethes in silence—all wanting out—compelling them onward, reflecting its atrocities against the space of silence that paints it. Through the black button unseeing eyes, he wavers over the ass and she sighs—barely audibly now as the grotesque baby bird head claims her own, beak sawn in rough pinking edges. Dejected, insipid, she stands heavily before her

prison cell, fleshy feet swollen red as he adorns her with brokenly soft limbs buckling beneath the weight of her monstrous form, scorning its preposterous dimensions—obese-burst globs distending between the pus-viscous sacs—legacy of man-made monster for grease-steeped convenience. Pressed inside she feels the ghosts of her brothers—traces of their legs broken and grown round the wire mesh in calcified tendrils of bone—spoon-clipped beak forced open and choking on the glug-glut cocktail of antibiotic infested hormones to protect her flesh from killing itself until it is time to be killed for someone else.

Change of Voice: Australian Aboriginal Genocide (as oppressed)

Relentlessly spinning in circles without beginning or end, the absurdity rushes in equal measure with fear—farce grounded in horror and etched into the faces and crumpling stances of those still keeping the Watch. Exhaustion remains the purest measure of time. Trembling hands, swinging fat pendulums between the hissing shadows marching in time, grapple for the pin his blank eyes bestow her—her eyes locked behind thick glass magnified in silent screams. Spinning loose and wildly now, stumbling between the tumbledown debris of objects detached from lost experience, its point finds home in the multitude of ghosted corpses swathed in the lies laid thickening in the bitter syrup of genocide. Fermenting secrets fed fat on the broken backs of the fragmented—another conquest in the tabled cloth cross-stitch of Imperialism. Closed, pulsing, contained. Familiarity: gone. Family: gone. Hope is not a word I know. New white face, new clean identity—no complications within the neat categories of numbers. Particulars remain extraneous in a world purified in opposition of right and wrong. Inside it is hot-dry, saw-sharp marching repeating now in comfortable rhythm with impending fatality—they say “no one’s fault”, I say, *no one is to blame*. Shivering thin frame, ankles rattling against the iron cuffs that bind my feet. All is dark save the red droplets filtering through my white no-name face. Clean autopsy—finds evidence only of my own lonely demise, captured, abused, labelled, dispersed, civilized—yet still not thankful and not working the job I am supposed to and doing as I am told all the time so here I lie and in weakness strip the life from my body—postmortem said so, *in writing*. Twenty years later my old wife’s tears falling on the remains of my smashed pelvis and prison guard’s finger-stains ‘round my throat. She wonders how his children are, noose tightens, white mask awry, ankle-cuffs in tight embrace—(in) traumatic trace.



Left: The Wounding Experience of the *punctum*

Further Concepts

The Conception of the Cry

It was decided during the conceptualization of the practicalities of the workings of the performance that a single anguished cry would be emitted by the relevant performer upon the realization that their actions were compelled to morph from active agency to receptive submission—yet another problematized dualism highlighted in of the process of performing the unNameable. In an otherwise text-devoid and wordless performance accompanied only by the repetitive saw-clang marching soundtrack, this singular groaning howl—the only vocalized expression whose tone questioned the containment of categories of despair and resignation—human and animal—gained heightened resonance in its isolate reverberation. The cry operated, in practice, as an indexical tool initiating the cyclical changeover of enacted torture. The sensibilities, however, of P1—masked game-player in this nightmarish parallel reality—became increasingly aware of a horrified, weighty anticipation of the looming lament, existing primarily as signifier of the audience’s complicity and voyeurism that grew implicitly, and incrementally with the momentum of the seemingly ceaseless, seamless onslaught of barbarism contained within pod 2. Of further significance is the fact that as the actions of pod 2 followed through the duration of their course, the act of vocalizing the cry dissolved any connection with preconceived action, its immediacy re-cloaking pre-scripted intention with the unstaged transparency of lived torment as exhaustion began to relentlessly impose itself on performers and spectator-performers alike.

The fact that the sheer exertion of the performance not only lent itself to “the cry” but the strain of the entire experience—of similar resonance to the Artaudian conception of the Theatre of Cruelty—meant, for, P1 and P2 that the actions became increasingly arbitrary, chaotic and unrehearsed albeit the most sizeable portion was rehearsed only on the level of the conceptual. This leads to another pointed question, that is, is the construction of a physically unrehearsed performance in some ways synonymous with the elements of chance that face us within a typical day vying for a possible encounter with the unNameable? That presumes that the potential for accessing new vistas of possibility is always there as is the potential for a seamless switch to another experience that is as plausible and uncontrived as a ‘performance’ devoid of performers, conducted by agents who see no discrepancy between ‘art and life’ and a concomitant differential between conscious and

unconscious representation. It is through this conception that accession to new portals of possibility, that are always already beckoning to be seen, exist in a relationship that is directly proportional to the constancy of their seeming invisibility.



**Left: Chrysalis Contents Now
Part of the Pod**

Freakshow: Performing Secrets Notes

ⁱ This puppet operates as a consistent yet elusive metonymic index of the unNameable and the associated meaning connected to the body of the disabled, criminal and animal Other—the body in pain, exhausted and incapacitated and separate from identity that exists outside of articulation within dominant logocentric structures of meaning—dismissed, forgotten, ignored or only remembered in its abjection. This is the body whose experiences are beyond reification, indexed through the *impossible* flying skeletal bird whose existence is premised on the body of neither the dead nor the living. The bird operates as symbolic portent of matters of grave significance—as messenger guiding the traveller through the crossroads between worlds. The bird as spiritual signifier, it is both of great personal import as well as bearing weighty significance within a number of cultural belief systems.

ⁱⁱ The audial aspect of the piece was composed in close collaboration with Tom W. Hall—a musician and friend who is familiar with the tone and intention of my practice.

ⁱⁱⁱ These are the people whose accession to basic human rights such as dignity and respect is denied them as stringently and completely as the vociferous promulgation of justice by politicians they did not vote for—in this 'utopia of majority rule'. These, too, are the animals whose bodies have been appropriated for unabating abuse, enabling their exploiters some perverse gain at the expense of their agency, freedom, and dignity.

^{iv} These masks are used extensively throughout the performance—the loss of identity reiterated each time a mask replaces a replica of the mask that reflected the last instance of torture. The paradox pitting the general against the particular is hopefully apparent here. When I originally conceived of these masks, I wanted them to be more or less identical, white and featureless—the one crucial difference being that each would be differentiated through a phrase scrawled across its surface—a lost and fictive anecdote referencing details of a specific prisoner's deviance—their individuated passport to torture. I chose to efface individuality on the level of the masks as I wanted the lack of individuation to speak as an overt metaphor relating the enforced anonymity often evident in the treatment of *disabled* and *animal* bodies—particularly those that are incarcerated—where reference to uniqueness is usually constrained to discussion of their corporeal, often scientifically validated anomalies without detailing their persona. Instead, I hoped to highlight the disjunction and tension within the matrices of constructed identity between this regulated wiping of personality and the particular lived experience of their personal containment and categorization. This was done primarily through referencing links of the enactment of their torture that correlated to documented evidence made available to the public that I had mapped out in the shape of the pin-the-tail-on-the-donkey game. Some of the satirical tension I was aiming to achieve was founded on the enactment of torture through gesture alone—mapping another's experience whilst implicitly commenting on the impossibility of knowing the mistreatment of another body whilst, I believe, correctly acknowledging and avoiding the trap of appropriating the experience of a dislocated body in order to make a political statement. The fact that the performer's own bodies were present and in obvious discomfort operated, I like to think, as jarring reminders that one's own body is always implicated in the duress of another of whose suffering we are aware—and therein the other side of the coin of irony is exposed.

^v In acknowledgement that such a scenario may well (and rightly so) be read as an appropriation of the victimization of the prisoner for the privileged and elitist function of creating 'art' devoid of links between the performer and those she

represents, I expose my own experience of torture, revealing my vulnerability and empathic connection with the group of prisoners, both human and animal, I have chosen to represent. One of the carceral areas of the donkey, then, contains a symbol that requires this personal unveiling process. It is important to point out that the personal unmasking not only involves prosthetics—this action, unlike the enactment of the prisoner torture within a possible world scenario, will not be representative of life, but is ‘of life itself’ in its status as completely non-constructed performance.

^{vi} Although certain signifiers are used to index the mechanisms of cruelty the victimized bodies are subjected to, they are not to be read as denotative representations of realities only gleaned through dubious and far from neutral sources. Pain, that state of abjection that remains essentially irresolvable and beyond the confines of signification, is only present as a factor indexing the possibility of experience that is shared by the spectator. This is referenced through their physicality and their implicit connectedness to the cultural forces that generate and articulate and allow such experience. Their engagement, even if it is only through silent contemplation, remains a necessary factor in the imminent creation of alternate possible worlds whereby they are faced with that which they perhaps would rather not see, would rather was kept silent. They hence come face to face with their complicity.

^{vii} Since the length of track 1 is 20 minutes long, a technician on standby could sound the siren after 17 minutes to alert the performers to the imminent change so that they can exit and take up their new positions. Furthermore, beginning the action 2 or 3 minutes into the piece could assist in shortening the time required for action, thereby allowing the music to be automatically queued on a suitable PA.

^{viii} Initially each instance was allocated a random and unique time. This was done away with when the performance was being prepared for since its action is unnecessarily complicated and does not alter the conceptual reasoning that is motivated through the irony of timed torture practices.

^{ix} Despite the fact that the performers intended to keep their action stilted, mechanical and unmoved, they found that they felt increasingly physically taxed and emotionally/psychologically burdened through the unabating unavoidable strain of dealing with the performative actions. This is despite—and ironically so—their plainly apparent reductive and representative nature.

^x This instance relates to the medical experiences undergone over a lifetime by the writer of the thesis. Initially, as it emerged in the debut performance, it involved an enactment of medical misadventure—a straightforward representation of the personal tortures of her past. In the second showing of *Freakshow*, a more parodic instance was outlined, designed to critique the dominant constructions of beauty and sexuality that saturate western media. Significantly, these are the representations she negotiates daily as a result of medical misadventure and represent and implicate an entanglement of meaning at the chiasmic points affecting her placement within the larger social structure. Although this instance was particular to her experiences, it did not affect the workings of performer changeability—in line with the ethos of the work that is designed to coerce all witnesses to examine their involvement in the construction of gendered stereotyping and beauty.

^{xi} Each new paragraph references a ‘change of voice’ as the performer steps into a different instance of the pin-the-tail-on-the-donkey game. This emphasizes the multiplicity of meaning evidenced in the splitting of consciousness

^{xii} Due to the fact that the technician was asked to end the tracking for the first pod and transit stage between the worlds sooner than expected, the entire action of incorporating musical accompaniment became far less rehearsed. This led to the third track beginning after the planned time of initiating the action in pod 2—the entrance into this world began somewhere within the liminal space of transit and therefore was both uncontainable and beyond location as it did not initiate at a fixed point but rather was birthed in an indeterminate number of ever-morphing points that are never identifiable as limits as they remain in constant motion, moving backwards and forwards and through time. Incidentally, there was a pause of ominous silence between track 2 and 3 which climaxed and broke its pregnant void just as the bowl of blood, flesh and eggs referencing the crushing of Steve Biko’s skull—the silent crime of torture of the ‘terrorist’ who apparently managed to smash his own head to pieces—was being held aloft by P1 prior to the weighty irreversible plummeting spillage of its contents across the floor, a spattering smattering of secrets—laid bare—covering everything in and beyond sight.

^{xiii} This instance was used in the debut of Freakshow and replaced with an instance of the disabled body forced to perform for a public complicit in reducing his subjectivity to that of a ‘performing monkey’. This was actioned to introduce some variety and to explore alternate hierarchical structures to problematize. Due to extenuating circumstances, however, an anecdote does not exist for the latter instance.



Above: *Reeler Than Real* Publicity Poster

Reeler Than Real

—*A performance presented by Sarah Forgan in collaboration with Nigel Gedge*

—*Original soundtrack by Tom. W. Hall*

Performance 2 of the Cycle of Performing the unNameable

In terms of the performance of the unNameable, *Reeler Than Real* focuses on an interrogation of the Gaze—on the shameful spectacle that emerges from the act of seeing that introduces interrogative questions about the body that exist as intrusive judgements relative to the marking of the body as abnormally differentiated other. This work derives from a place of grim acknowledgement of the stigmas associated with that act of looking—this is not a place of innocence, but rather is learned as a reality of the lived experience of those who undergo the persistent unsolicited questions of the interrogative gaze that are always already asked.

This act of looking is problematized in our creative collaboration and comprises an exploration to new possible worlds of re-viewing. This assertion of renewed articulation speaks back to the totalizing power of the dominant visual apparatus, redirecting it back to its source. Furthermore, it introduces a multiplicitous mirroring effect that parodies conventional ways of seeing the world, rejecting the frames of convention that are imposed through the ideologies of normativity governing dominant methods of the visualizing culture.

Though the creation of new worlds of figuration involving fantastical narratives and humorous characterizations, the visual archaeologies of power are overturned and transgressed as the former dominating visual purview is arbitrated and reconfigured.

This work also operates as a parody of the conventions of the tourist photograph—whose predictable banality creates a simulacrum of reality that bears little connection to the mnemonics of experiential embodiment. Dominated by the iconic and the clichéd, the *punctum* of these photographs is annulled. Barthes, in his discussion of the mechanism of the *studium* and *punctum*, describes the lack inhering in the tourist photograph—through its failure to excite the desire to live within the landscape depicted. Its distinct failure to encourage habitation (Barthes, 38: 1981) as opposed to visitation, emphasizes the overarching dominance of the *studium* and suggests to me a connection with the *Unheimlich*, as articulated by Freud. Its uncanniness emerges from the constructed emphasis of its representation that signifies a wall between experience and engagement with the environment. It depicts a supposedly memorable experience that relates to elements of the grotesque in its artificiality—its distinct lack of dynamism in its representation of memorable experience.

By situating our originary photographs revealing worlds created within the confines of one small room using only a webcam, these visual landscapes undermine the authenticity of the tourist experience. Since tourism is largely dependent on the construction of the authentic image as indexed memento of one's experience, this work, located within the nucleus of Christchurch's tourism industry and cultural nexus, challenges the

viewer to consider their identity as travellers and consumers of culture and the production of their experiences that are always inescapably allied to their physical embodiment. The work was visited by a large number of tourists as well as locals during the week that it was showing.



Left: Sarah and Nigel on Opening Day

Reeler than Real

Introduction

Reeler than Real is a collaborative multi-media interactive installation piece designed to be exhibited in The Arts Centre's Cloisters gallery for 5 days from Tuesday 8th April 2008 to Saturday 12th April 2008. It is a joint work conceived through the artist, Sarah Forgan and her friend and collaborator, Nigel Gedge, with audial accompaniment by Tom Hall.

Situated in The Arts Centre—a central point locating the hub of Christchurch's artistic and cultural arena, the work exists in continuing dialogue with prevailing cultural ideas regarding travel—challenging, through comparison and contrast, the significance of embodied experience and imagistic meaning creation. In this postmodern world saturated in images and competing visual codification—that is often in alliance with a rapidly multiplying shift in emphasis to cybernetic communication, the idea of the authenticity of experience is increasingly visible and difficult to ignore. In this work this problematization of Fantasy and Reality—of the

construction of the Real and the Illusory—is referenced with particular emphasis on the ideological construction of the body and its problematic relationship with the production of images as trace.

Since tourism is largely dependent on the construction of the authentic image as indexed memento of



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Left: Booth Structure and Frames

Physical Description

Located centrally within the gallery space is a tented 'booth structure', roughly 2mx4mx3m. It is constructed from a collapsible metal framework and covered with sewn fabric drop sheets that can be entered and exited through slits in the fabric. This structure can be erected and disassembled within a time frame of 2–3 hours if necessary and is easily packed away for transportation and storage purposes.

A chain of foot replicas cast in latex and embedded in wood chips are situated in various areas throughout the space. Hanging at various heights inside the space a series of large (1.5–2m²) 'postcard-frames' hang from hooks in the ceiling —each one referencing a particular theme, narrative or idea. Each theme is comprised of a matrix of interwoven ideas and images sourced through the collaborators' collective imaginary.

Elaboration

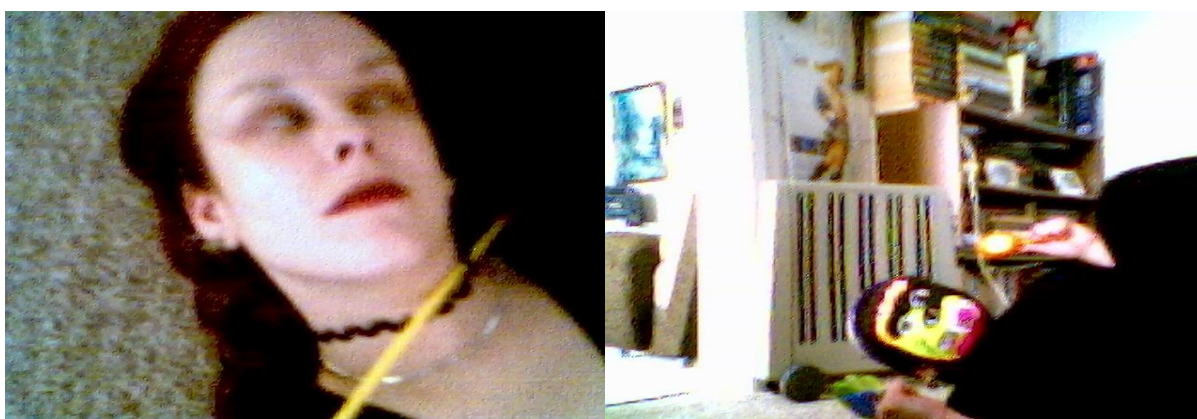
The space that houses this work comprises a combination of two radically contrasting interiors. The first is the larger, the gallery room. The signification in this room exists as a world of parody—ironic comment on a number of levels. Firstly, it parodies the idea of obtaining a keepsake or memento as trace of one's tourist/travel experience. A typical example might be a photograph documenting one's presence in a foreign

environment, taken within close proximity to an architectural structure or ‘natural phenomenon’ that has been promulgated as culturally significant by the host culture’s nationalist imaginary. This irony is overtly referenced by a series of large (1-1.5m²) formulaically placed ‘postcard’ picture frames inhabiting the inside perimeter of the space—allowing enough room to form a frame behind the visitor enthusiastic to have their picture taken. These frames also reference the kitsch experience one can undergo in local arcade games parlours and airports where the participant enters a small curtained booth patterned with garish colours and catchy badly-translated slogans encouraging one to record one’s experiences—typically surrounded by love hearts, bubbles and lollipops against a lime and strawberry fountain of Cute—or, perhaps for the more nostalgically-driven, a sepia sunset and corresponding authentically aged flaky cracked frame for a ‘historical’ set of memories produced. These booths abound in airports and games arcades and aren’t distinguishable from one another relative to their locale—the yellow butterflies and lollipop swirls are the same in Christchurch, Singapore and Perth.

For the purposes of this work, each themed frame operates as a direct link to the curiously original and often fantastical environments or worlds conjured through a dual process of role-playing and writing simple narratives that are improvised by Nigel and I as we create. Each theme is comprised of a matrix of interwoven ideas and images sourced through our collaborative collective imaginary. Weekly, I arrive at Nigel’s bed with a rough idea of a character or persona to morph into—sometimes this is loosely planned but often I introduce a surprise—and Nigel as photographer frames and shoots, directing me to move myself and/or the web camera while he looks at the screen and operates the mouse from his bed with his one mobile arm. Although confined to a single room due to limitations on our physical mobility in the Real World, through the utilization of a series of simple props and accoutrement and a digital web camera, the tiny area is transformed through our shared reconfiguration of space as we begin to form a frame of reference—adapting, redefining and refining our experiences. Our shared affective response to and transformation of our physical environment seems to displace time and challenge accepted notions of fixity as we enter a parallel world that blurs seemingly clear distinctions between constructed notions of Being and Representation—Fiction and Fact, Reality and Fantasy. Hence, ideological constructions of normalcy that seek to link the limitation of Possibility of alternate articulations of experience and representations of the socially inscribed aberrant body, are challenged. Ironically it is the photographs themselves, existing as digital traces of actual lived experience, that continue to exist as windows framing a memory captured within the physical limitations of time.



Clockwise Starting from Top Left: Meeting the Demon; Close-Up Gerbil; Death Confirmed; Voodoo II



As traces of the adventures we undertake, the photographs most certainly are not synonymous with the experiences we share during their creation, nor are they, however, the mere by-product of our visitation—much like a typical tourist postcard might operate. Rather, they remind us of our travels and reflect them back onto us in ways we cannot foresee—operating not as mere fragments caught in time but as evidence of dynamic lived experience guiding us through our travels—the eye of the webcam operating as a tool, a continuing frame of reference. The series of themed frames are birthed of these photographic narratives, their contextual density transfigured through irony to mimic the clichéd mass-produced postcards and related tourist-oriented memorabilia typical of any country with a tourist industry. Within the context of simulated experience, generic postcards aimed at travellers journeying through Real Space and Time, are often composed of a set of stylized, commodified symbols of ‘experience’ whose indices reference predetermined natural, architectural, artistic and cultural monuments to the heritage of Place whereby individualized experiences are often suppressed, if not forgotten altogether, as they become overlaid through largely inaccessible hyper-real apices of the commercialization and exoticization of foreign locale. These mass-produced indices of the Cultural Experience are arguably epitomized in locations such as the photographic booths located in tourist hotspots such as the airport—in the liminal spaces *between* places where one’s experience becomes synonymous with the image produced to reference it. The irony contained within the series of frames emerges through performance—when the visitor is photographed within their borders—occupying the space inside the frame signifies travel within worlds of imagination that are accessed without physical mobility.



Left: A Curious Bug

The irony is doubled when the visitor is offered the option of receiving a printed image of their experience within their chosen frames—their keepsake lending mobility to a narrative whose meaning was birthed within the confines of a single room. The frames, much like the booths and borders they emulate, are founded on cultural cliché and hence embody the dualisms that give rise to the reductive ideologies they emerge from. These are magnified through the relationship between the cheap kitsch of the frames in dialogue with the printed photographs whose chosen contrasts echo, at times, abjection veiled in apparent idiocy.



Left: Visitor in Frame 'Model of Efficiency'

As the visitor steps between and around the frames, their feet travel over a ring of large footprint/leg silhouettes that encircle a centrally-placed booth-like structure. These prints are comprised of the montaged collection of images that were birthed within the tiny confines of the original room constraining and containing their production and content. These are the photographs that found the themed frames. In each I represent the object of the Gaze.



Left: Visitor in Frame 'Princes and Peasants'

Although Nigel is the hidden watcher of each image produced, he and I are both subjects or watchers, since it is necessary for me to move

the camera back and forth, circumnavigating the space whilst alternately referencing the screen and questioning Nigel, to be sure that I am held within the frame of the lens. The variation of the theme governing each week's shoot provides a rather stark contrast—ranging between a set of insects, superhero characters such as 'Little Miss Mafia' and 'Pirate Princess' to the 'Living Domino' and the 'Obese Baby Gorilla' voodoo set. In contrast, then, the photographs offered to the spectating subject of this work present an alternate lens that operates as both challenge and lure to reconsidering and rearticulating the manner in which the image representative of lived experience may operate.



Left: Visitor in Frame 'Little Miss..?'

Also placed within the room is a repetitive linear chain of foot replicas cast in wax and plaster flanking the skirting board within 10–20 cm of the wall. These objects are tangible links to the feet that bear us—as visitors—between destinations and their presence is particularly poignant given the fact that

the images that birthed this work were photographed by a charismatic traveller—a man that traverses the world in his mind and body, albeit he has never had the privilege of placing one foot in front of the other in order to move—to walk—as the majority of visitors do, and, perhaps, take for granted as they travel.



Left: Foot Replica; Cast Latex and Wood Chips

Located centrally within the gallery space is a tented 'booth structure', roughly sized as 2mx4mx3m. It is constructed from a collapsible metal framework and is covered with sewn fabric drop sheets that can be entered and exited through slits in the fabric. The shape and exterior façade is loosely fashioned to represent a kitsch instant-photo booth such as those located in games arcades and airports. The iconography is comprised of a blend of western 'chic kitsch' and local kiwiana designed to appeal to tourists and—through extension—to flout, through common, publicly recognizable symbols, the ideology of a pro-nationalist identity. The irony contained within its signification becomes distinctive through its seemingly unique localization—whose homogeneity is pervasive enough to conjure national pride and the illusion of equality through the apparent sameness of identityⁱ. It is important to note that this symbolism, too, is intentionally ironical—parodying the creation and advertisement of ideologies of Nationality, Perfection, Success and Equality that simultaneously claim to include all yet continue to produce discrimination through their employment of hierarchical ideologies to enforce a myth of an egalitarian status quo to sell to foreign and local consumers.

Below: Stone Piles, Photo's and Footprints



Importantly, the interior of the centrally placed booth is radically different from its exterior. The visitor must get a sense of this obvious contrast for the effect of the message—relating the relationship of representations of the body to tourism and travel—to be realized. The interior represents a doorway to enchantment encapsulated within a small otherworldly space that signifies a magical portal—a world within worlds. A coiled swirl—reminiscent of the

koru—a sacred symbol to the Aotearoan Maori begins here, its point of origin marking the centre of the space that divides the worlds. It emanates in a gradually increasing spiral of stones that move outward beyond the booth through the drop cover almost to the rim of the skirting board. It's most dominant reading, particularly from an Aotearoan perspective, is its shared symbolism with that of the unfurling fern frond representing new life and new beginnings in Maori culture. This reading also prevails in many pre-Christian belief systems—such as the pagan cultures of pre-Christian Europe—that are once again gaining ground as is evidenced currently within contemporary westernized neo-shamanic and witchcraft practices. The fact that the spiral is

made from stone—symbolic of the earth that we are born from, return to and require for life—gains further significance regarding its relation to the motif of travel driving this work. These spiralling pebbles of polished earth reference markers made of stone that range in size from towering boulders and stone sculptures such as those at Stonehenge—located in the UK—that are said to bear great spiritual significance, to the variously sized stone piles encountered in numerous locations and contexts—often associated with travel and discovery—worldwide. These constructions are communal and normally exist without the rules governing the creation of artefacts as precious or transcendent—two of many cultural constraints placed upon certain forms of expression used to mediate ownership and access. They exist, for the most part, continuously with their construction and are hence subject to layers of meaning that do not vie for the apex of the hierarchy within the culturally claustrophobic canons espousing the nature of Truth and Art. These piles all have an intimate relationship to place and to their particular location, often being recognised as nexuses of good luck to the traveller who adds another stone to the tower, as well as marking the significance of their passing.



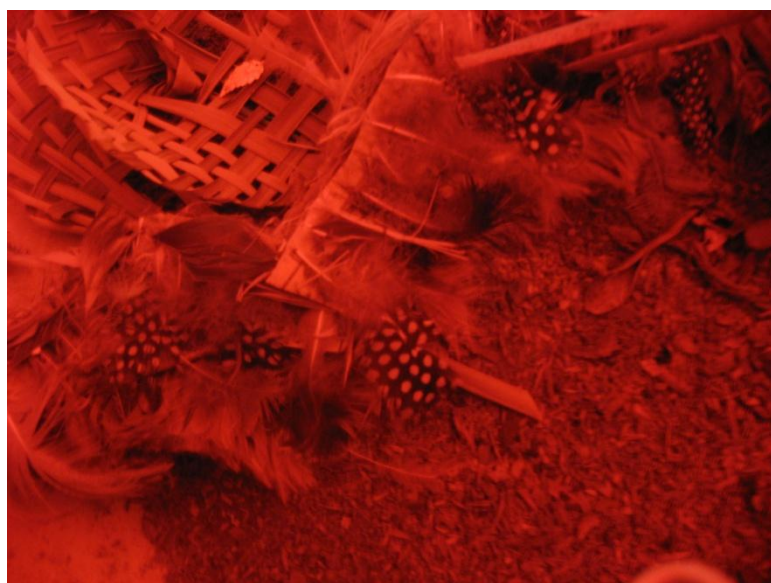
Left: The Shaman

A slowly spinning disc—the apex of this vortex, this world between worlds is located at the centre of the portal, its placing marking the beginning of the *koru*. Turning regularly, clockwise—its subject matter and iconography signify the crossroads of life—the points

between worlds, is located at the centre of the portal, its placing marking the beginning of the *koru*. Turning regularly, clockwise—its subject matter and iconography signify the crossroads of life—the points between paths in one's existence where significant, consequential, unforgettable change occurs—the peaks of pleasure, despair, growth decay, knowledge, birth and death. Its constant rhythmic speed serves as a reminder that time, though a construct, ticks on—leading us to the crossroads spaces whether we think we are prepared or not. Although the content of the signification is birthed from my own experience, the disc exists as signifier of the manifestation of each visitor's path-working. The communal accessibility I hope to provide through the disc stems from a belief, held in many shamanic and pagan based cultures, that at various crucial points in their existence, living creatures—predominantly what most would refer to as human—undergo a transformation so metamorphic that a new and unique articulation of their existence is forged.



Left: Traces of Mark-making



Left: Keepers of the Sacred Spaces

It can be convincingly argued that at times of great change in one's life, one tends to look inwards, to understand and explore fundamental aspects of one's identity. In order to face forward and follow the path out of the crossroads into the future, the past should be considered and faced for one to know and understand one's present state—

indeed, one's presence. For healing to occur, for strength to be maintained, both ecstatic and despairing times must be experienced and—it is my belief—acknowledged and articulated even if only for oneself. Although the visitor's experience is likely to be highly personal and, in a sense, invisible—and their placement relative to the crossroads unique, it is an experience rich enough, I believe, to remain accessible to all. The visitor becomes the means of articulation as the work provides a platform for inviting thought of travel and associated memories, experiences and future paths. Creation of a narrative or a picture—the act of making a mark somewhere—serves to ground the subject, providing a tangible link to experience. The motif of the crossroads is a powerful symbol of the liminal spaces traversed in this type of journey—and, for the purposes of this work, the spinning disc forms the central point whose entirety is indexical of one's own unique form of meaningful and life-changing travel. Entering this portal, it is hoped, will catalyze the urge to articulate alternative ways of seeing—

where one's body and one's placement are in meaningful dialogue with internal and possibly entirely private vision that is nonetheless always affected through the timeline of one's cultural and physical location. The ceaseless transience of the space held within the booth exists in ironic duality as partner to the space surrounding it. Whilst the latter irons out contextual creasing, the former invites new layers of fabric to be woven within and through the cloth it punctuates.

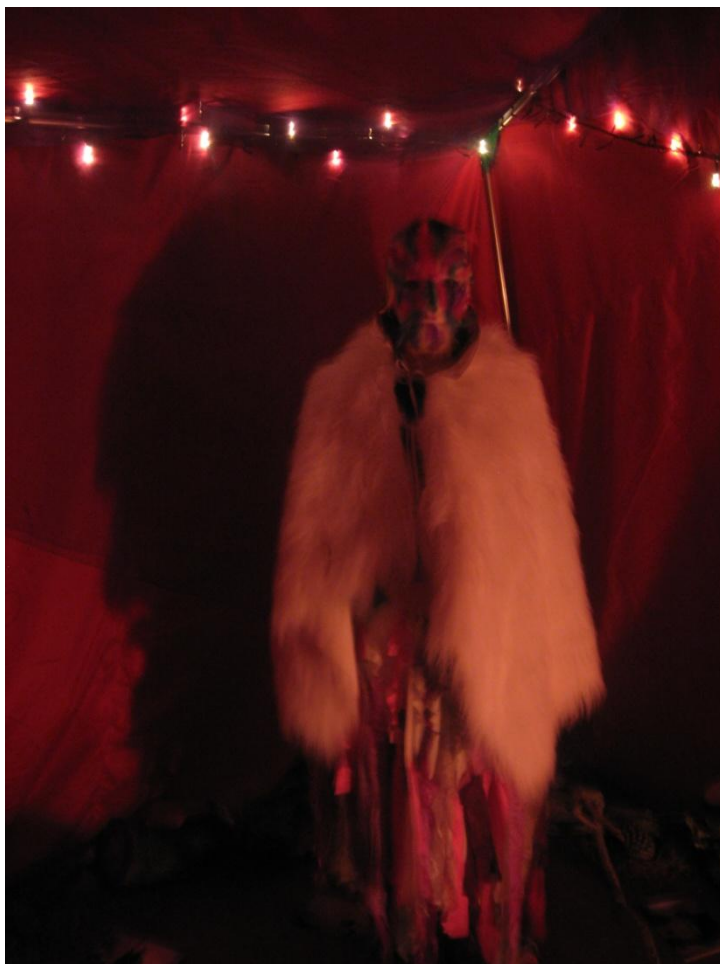
The Keepers

Forming an enchanted grove—a barrier of protection between the starkly contrasting room of kitsch frames and tented booth parodying the commercially orientated tourist trade—exist an array of creatures fashioned of wood, stone, sand and plants. These represent the keepers of the sacred spaces where humans experience mystery, possibility, magic and enchantment. These creatures at first glance are just bits of wood, stone, branches, kelp and shells—a collection of organic artefacts. On taking a second glance, however, one notices a sparkling eye gleaming in the shadows; a paw of white bone, its wooden knotted knuckles entwining a forehead grizzled out of rock faces exposed to the wind; indented mouths, sometimes toothed, sometimes shrivelled dark knots, tentacles coiled smoothly around stones. These are the creatures comprising the fundamentals of human and animal existence since their place and substance found much of what all is made of and all return to. On first reading this motley throng, they appear to constitute a set of materials we live with in highly variable relationships of symbiosis. All organic—that is, derived from living organisms—these shapes and substances exist in intimate, complex relationships to us—the latter infinitesimally diverse. Throughout the world they exist in support and shelter to us, are fashioned to adorn us, feed us and those we feed on, poison and devour our attackers—the list itself is inexhaustible—within the diversity of human thought patterns, these substances remain integral, their relationships to us and to one another complex, never static, ever metamorphic. These substances—these forms—are layered with cultural meaning ranging from abject revulsion to fearful adoration—filling the spaces between the polarities of perfection and abhorrence. Their place within this work is designed for interpretation—to encourage contemplation of personal and culturally prevalent belief systems and one's relationship to our organic environment. A scientist may wonder at the complexity of the avian skeletal structure, the marvellous twisting vines of kelp or the record of years manifested as concentric rings manifested within fluctuating bark densities. A shaman, however, might hear the ghostly cry of the owl and know a death is nigh, trace her fingers through the vines of kelp and discover scales of sea-people invisible to the average eye, or hear fortunes in the whispering leaves of ancient forests. Some see trees as great giants frozen in a different time—in the end it is not the seeing, it is the way of seeing that leads to new pathways of discovery. Whether the visitor decides to read and see through a system of logic—where distinct boundaries between Subject and Object remain—or to blur the seeming distinction between Here and There and in so doing employ a more esoteric system of thought, is entirely optional. As the viewer steps within the portal, they are encouraged to see beyond that which they normally see. Their level of participation in this work is in their hands—those that see nothing they have not seen before are as important as those who see with new eyes. Some believe that every organic form resonates with a certain awareness—these are the creatures I have met on my journey—and we invite the visitor to enjoy their stay. This space of enchantment attempts to remove one from

culturally stringent ideologies. It is prepared as a haven to replace these hierarchies with the magic of the embodied awareness—the shared physicality of being alive and corporeal. It will hopefully, at the least, remind one that to travel significantly may be as simple as immersing ones feet in water or listening to the music whispered by the wind in the leaves of the trees—the silent watchers of the worlds. This is a place devoid of the discrimination that allows some privilege over others.

Performance

The shaman sits within the alcoved embrace housing the disc and the Keepers, painting and adjusting this environment, and working with natural divination. She is an amalgamation of cultural prejudice, patriotic platitudes and magic as old as time. Physically she is comprised of a bizarre eclectic mixture of iconography that deliberately confuses categories—whilst still maintaining an otherworldly sensibility. Her appearance speaks of ancient lore and the very contingency of cultural/political fashion. Her primary role is as a guide—



both as a facilitator encouraging participation in the work as well as a guide in the more esoteric, shamanic sense. Her involvement includes emphasizing the ideological overlaps and restrictions punctuating the social and political worlds of modern human design—paradoxically, she highlights their constraints whilst searching for entries into new spaces within those spaces—where alternate meaning can be articulatedⁱⁱ. Context remains consciously and overtly fundamental to representation.

Left: The Shaman Guide

In terms of the performative element of the installation surrounding the booth, the footprint-montages of photographs introduce and contextualize the ‘postcard frames’ on display, proposing themed categories that operate in ironical dialogue with the props and keepsakes augmenting and ornamenting them. The frames are offset with photos and objects exemplifying the commercialization of place and the characteristically

exaggerated exoticism enabling the production of the Tourist Experience that simultaneously others as it reduces the subject to a hyper-consumer of the tantalizing appropriated location. They are fitted to hang at an 'average human' height, thereby encouraging the viewer to inhabit the space behind and in front of them, as one would if posing for a picture. The comparison and contrast of the frames and photographs should become apparent when it is considered that images birthed from incredibly confined conditions are employed to effect engagement with a host of strange visitors outside of the personal affect of that original world.

Through viewing and possibly participating in this work, the visitor is reminded of their relationship to place and the patterns their steps carve in the production of travel imagery. They are presented with an invitation and a platform for contemplating their own identification with and complicity in the production of image as trace and its relationship to the confines of the body and mobility.

During the opening hours of the show, the performer as hybridized shape-shifter occupies the space within the centralized booth. Her primary actions are as follows:

*To take photographs of visitors behind their chosen frames at their request. This is done with the aid of a webcam that is connected to a laptop so that it can be easily shifted to face any hanging frame. As a memento and tangible link to their experience of the work, the visitor is invited to have their photograph taken within any of the themed environments of their choosing, which may be printed off for them to keep.

*To encourage visitors to choose a stone from the spiral emanating from the crossroads disc and add it to an existing pile or lay the foundations for a new one. Adding a stone to a pile creates a link between the visitor—adding significance and density to the experience located through the postcard frames and pictures—and the collaborators, Nigel and Sarah. This action may also suggest a reminder that although not all of us are able to travel to a stone pile we can, as travellers, still experience significant relationships to place and the excitement of discovery. This last point is important as, for Nigel and I, the work necessarily implicates the body and one's physicality—for although we enforce limits or traverse boundaries on our perceptual, social and cultural conceptions, we always remain housed within the bodies we find ourselves in.

*To encourage visitors to add their name or other graffiti message to the exterior of the booth. The fabric drop sheets make perfect canvasses when markers are used. The marking of the cloth is significant on a number of levels. Most obviously, this work is founded on the significance of one's presence and one's context and how this figures representatively as well as experientially. Marking the cloth in this way adds further to engagement and to the articulation of the significance of one's presence in the space. Furthermore, the cloth's exterior emulates the "kiwiana" tourist-oriented kitsch I discussed above and so the individualistic markings made by individuals should exist in interesting dialogue with these motifs of homogeneity. Lastly, the cloth that housed pod 2 for *Freakshow II*—the pod of chaos where torture was exposed and performatively meted out relentlessly for forty minutes—is the same cloth I will be using to house this portal of Possibility. The pod of possibility—pod 1 of *Freakshow*, was a vulnerable and childlike space. Comparatively, this portal is imbued with the magic of anticipation, offering the idea of a chance at finding new paths that are not already or, more correctly, *completely* comprised of signifiers of distortion and mutation—of the kind born of pain and suffering and the closure of despair it brings.

Other Physical/Environmental elements of *Reeler than Real*

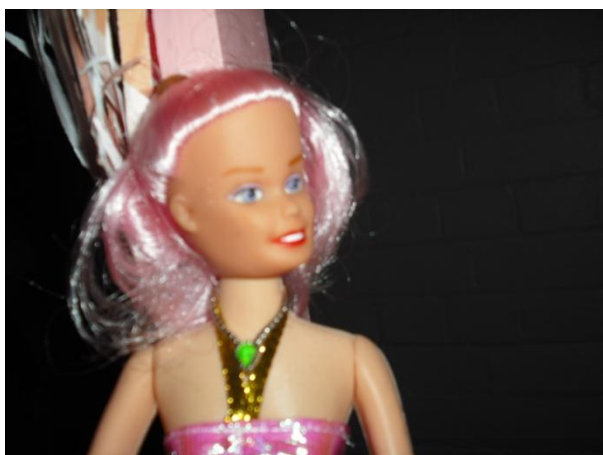
This performance installation worked well with some auditory enhancement. Once again I asked my friend Tom Hall to compose an accompaniment of backgrounded sound that does not overpower the other sensory aspects of the work. It involves a piece that is comprised of number of layers informed through the harmony and discordance between the larger parodic space and the magical portal it encloses. Significant features marking this work are connected with travel since it is this theme that continues to weave its way through the work—so some sounds that allude to that—footsteps moving in sand, gravel or mud—human, animal or fae running, walking, scampering or sliding, were appropriated. Flight and the theme of the bird as omen and guide predominate in all the works of this performance series and so sounds of insect wings clipping the air, bird calls and man-made machines such as air balloons, aeroplanes and helicopters were included. Furthermore, the medium of water—in its many forms and manifestations—is also particularly prevalent in this work—many of the Keepers derive from driftwood draped in thickly undulating belts of kelp. Forests and trees also comprise a large part of the Keepers’ menagerie—pine cones, collected tree roots and branches abound. In accordance with the enchantment of the inner portal, various sounds, lilting and darker and more ominous melodies are suited—together with chimes, elven footsteps and the silver laughter of pixie bells. In stark contrast to these types of sounds are those that derive from the realm of travel and experience represented in the clichés of the frames. Each frame is comprised of a group of themes as follows:

1. “Little Miss...?” —a parody of heroic criminals where I am represented as a sexy Mafioso, a maniacal male pirate and a terrorist
2. “La Femme Fatale”—a parody of the female as object of sexual desire reduced to a cute pet animal
3. “Selective Viewing”—a satirical series of photographs of the apparent ‘sportsman’s body’
4. “Insect World”—a bizarre series of shots of a giant human-insect hybrid
5. “Beauty and the Beast”—a blatant contrast between the covered, shamed grotesque body and the beautiful body
6. “Model of Efficiency”—a rather humorous montage of ‘sexy girl’ images contrasted with a masculinized woman feeding porn images through a paper shredder
7. “Princes and Peasants”—a surreal and comedic mixture of art images commonly referred to as avant-garde and the image of the jester, the latter a prevailing icon of popular/low art.



The sounds correlating to this admittedly wide-ranging and eclectic mixture should possibly contrast those associated with horror and the abject—such as that of the body shamefully exposed—with the buffoonery typified through noises of farts, circus jingles and extending to seemingly impossibly limits such as bees buzzing and apes grunting during mating. The idea, as I have mentioned, is for there to be a back-dropped wall of sound that complements the visual and spatial experience.

Top Down: Entrance to *Reeler Than Real*; Sexy School-girl; Visitor in Frame 'Insect World'; Greeting the Public aka Spiderwoman



Top Down: Beauty; The Demon Very Close Up;
Frame 'Princes and Peasants'; "What a Monkey
Temper!"

How It All Began

Nigel Gedge. Personal Interview with Sarah 1, 25 September 2007

“Hi my name is Nigel Gedge. I was born in 1957. I have always been interested in art of some kind, from bits of chalk or crayons to paintbrushes. When I met Sarah and we got talking she came up with this brilliant idea of exploring travel as we see it in our mind’s eye. Due to my disabilities, I had to stop traveling about twelve years ago. Before that, my mother and I went everywhere—all over the North Island—so you could say I know my way around the North Island a lot better than I do around the South Island, even though I was born down here. When it came to doing things, my mother used to say to me, “Well Nigel, you won’t know until you try it, will you?” Some of my early misadventures raised quite a few eyebrows at school. I suppose you could say that I got more paint on me than on the paper! After I met Sarah and we started shooting these pictures with my webcam plus working on all their titles, my mum was quite fascinated—that was before she got sick.

Well, here we are, I hope you all enjoy the show, I am pretty sure mum would. Sarah and I have agreed that this show should be dedicated to my mother. She was born on the tenth of October 1918 and sadly passed away on the tenth of November 2007”.

Nigel and Sarah: The Story of Collaboration

It all began for me when I answered an advert, thinking I could possibly fulfil the criteria as a companion—just—all these years of study of course have polished me into fine employment material. I soon found out that Nigel is a highly intelligent man with a wicked sense of humour and certainly seemed to possess more than a mere penchant for photography. What began as a playful game with the webcam quickly snowballed into an ongoing and increasingly addictive and exciting performance adventure. Nigel, manning his computer with inspired eye and strong aesthetic preference slipped into his role as photographer about as easily as I primped and preened, devising increasingly bizarre and complex representations that soothe and nurture the I-thought-dead Exhibitionist Show(wo)man, challenging us to create scenarios that lead us to *play* as much as we allow ourselves to share vision and adapt to the other’s ideas. Normal transmutes to Adventure. We travel together.

Typically our creative process follows a pattern of cues that we (I) absently know to follow, that inevitably eat time before we feel satiated. That, of course, only compels us on to the next instance. Once I have revealed my props to him—the choice of which are arbitrary to the point of reaching a beginning, after which it somehow lopes, swipes and

runs while we gallop alongside—usually including a mask and often a surprise, he fires up the webcam whilst I transform my image so as to ‘represent’ a specific or more loosely based ‘theme’. Through my adjustment of lighting and the position of the camera, we are able to begin forming a frame of reference that will allow the pictures we create to suit our tastes and our shared affective response to the ways the props transform me and the space into a parallel world that blurs distinctions between Being and Representation—between Fiction and Fact, between Reality and Fantasy. Nigel is able to use one (his right) arm very effectively and with the assistance of some adjustments made to his computer, is able to manipulate the mouse to take the pictures whilst looking at the computer screen. Once I have suitably prepared myself and he has taken a shot, I jump up and together we evaluate it—deciding which technical aspects to alter, such as varying the lighting, shade, lens zoom and often the elimination of background objects obscuring the frame of reference. Sometimes, the initial photographs take on a certain mood that we have not considered until we view the product and this directs the creation of further shots. The webcam is low-tech and takes photographs most would consider unacceptable from a technical point of view due to the pictorial blurring and overall lack of clarity, the odd warped representation of perspective and bizarre portrayal of light and shadow. However, it is not only in spite of, but perhaps due to these factors that makes these photographs hold so much meaning for us. Each represents a shared vision of an excursion into a plethora of possibility, our imaginations driving us on to capture these moments. Once we have taken a set of photographs, we save them on to Nigel’s computer—deleting the ones we decide are disposable. Nigel is in charge of devising a name for each picture in each series—we bounce ideas around sometimes—constructing a type of narrative or perhaps an abstracted world where time does not seem to matter. We then print out the set and insert them into a plastic folder which Nigel keeps until my next visit. Our interactions, ironically, are rather limited in terms of Real Time but we always manage a few photographs despite factors that tire the body and limit the chance to explore. Hence, and I am speaking for both of us here, it has come to mean that a visit devoid of photographs is incomplete and when I leave I know we both anticipate with excitement the construction of and adventures into a new world of shared excitement and possibility.

Reeler Than Real: REFLECTIONSⁱⁱⁱ

PARTICIPATION AND RESPONSES

Most people are curious. Some people appear inhibited on entering the space and the exact reasons informing this are not always clear—disinterest, intimidation, self consciousness or a genuine inability to connect with the

work are a selection of viable possibilities. Those people, however, did not make much of an effort to actively engage or could not find the time to stay and consider the machinations of the piece. The majority, however, appear to be receptive to its signification and respond to the work with varying degrees of openness and enthusiasm.

I find that I rarely need to actively explain the work—particularly in terms of a detailed analysis—that isn't to say that its primary premises are, necessarily, wholly understood, however its surface, practical operation usually dominates a more conceptual explanatory requirement^{iv}.

When I do explain that the work is intentionally interactive, in a state of temporal flux and dynamic, visitors are often keenly enthusiastic to participate in the performativity of being photographed. Some people even take it upon themselves to use their own cameras—though this is often preceded with an appeal for permission. Commonly, the visitors most likely to participate by adding to the graffiti and/or by being photographed/posing are young people (5-30ish years old) and foreigners—that is, non-New Zealand tourists.

One man in particular came in and confidently began taking photographs, not of the frames—that is, he did not engage in the process of framing someone else within the installation and recording this version of the gaze—which the work was designed to invite. Instead, he appeared to be photographing the pieces comprising the work as objects and elements of an installation which, of themselves, would seem to hold some measure of intrinsic value. This unnerved me. I had, of course, invited participation which, I presume, serves as a foil to sole control over the images within the space. In fact, one of the priorities of the work was to challenge authorial ownership and encourage the visitor to not only question their complicity in the perpetuation of conventional touristic imaging of the travel experience, but also to engage in the recreation of the worlds Nigel and I had created through photographic representation of their engagement. After watching the man taking careful, deliberate shots of my constructed pieces I became suspicious as to his motives and enquired as to his purpose in taking these photographs.

From the outset his reaction was dubious and I still feel perplexed at isolating his intention. I gathered that their final destination was the World Wide Web and that he had placed images on the internet according to some chosen theme—this one being something along the lines of ‘work versus play’. He contradicted himself regarding the accessibility of the site, vacillating between its ‘public’ and ‘private’ access and its function, moving from ‘commercial’ to ‘recreational’ without elaboration. He left before I could take it any further and I realise now why this incident has dogged me so. We created this exhibition as a token of sharing, thereby removing any notion of preciousness through welcoming visitors to touch and interact with the piece—to engage with its invitation of playfulness. It was in a spirit of trust that this work was platformed and, perhaps, naively, I chose not to focus on the possibility that there might exist those who would not respect this gesture and respond to my invitation selfishly. The actions of this man are an example of that. He took without asking, masking his intentions, thereby engaging in a theft of the spirit of the work for his own private gain. This attitude was also evident in the occasional thieving of props and masks and the kicking over of various stone piles built by travellers who had responded more positively to the work. Elements of surprise are inevitable when one showcases an interactive performance piece and in that sense they are welcomed. I do not feel,

however, that gratuitous appropriation and vandalism should therefore be allowed to prevail unmediated so as to undermine, as I have already mentioned, the gesture of generosity concomitant with the work.

ANTI-COMMERCIALIZATION

The commercialization of an art work—that is, its primary value being quantifiable in monetary terms—predominates within the cultural confines of ‘the art world’ and is largely problematic for a number of reasons. It implies that the artist is creating something whose value is determined by the dollar, thereby intimating its inherent conceptual redundancy—the latter of which, ironically, should counter its value as an aesthetic asset. It certainly implies that its meaning is determinate and presumably that this quantifiable meaning warrants an increased price tag. Furthermore, its fixity is cemented by the fact that its meaning exists outside of the context that supports it, since its value as a commodity remains intact, presumably, when it is taken away to be displayed elsewhere by the purchaser. All of these issues place the viewer at a disadvantaged hierarchical level relative to the artist. This idea, that valorizes the artist as inheritor of aesthetic transcendence, undermines the work’s capacity as an interrogative, challenging social and political response—the piece tending to reside in a cultural vacuum [so to speak] other than its often transparent operation as a signifier for elitist social legitimacy. This work, designed to flout commercialization, emphasizes participation and interaction in the process of embodied meaning-making and is designed to encourage a breakdown of the transcendent ideas informing a modernist ideologue that requires fixity of meaning to persist for its validation.

AUTHORSHIP: MULTIPLE SIGNIFICATION

People are often also surprised when they realize they are not merely ‘allowed’, but are actively encouraged to participate in the piece and receive a print of their experience free of charge. This usually invites immediate relaxation and ensuing engagement and it is surprising how few people continue to view the work with trepidation. Some viewers—perhaps those more fluent in visual signification and accustomed to installation pieces—display an understanding of the capacity of the work as accumulative—a work-in-progress that is not completed before its presence in the context of the space and surrounding Arts Centre is allowed to develop. These responses suggest to me that the work employs strategies to target relevant issues informing some common social perceptions regarding the ontology and purpose of contemporary artistic practice. Firstly, the idea that one is not given, but rather assumes licence to move through the spatial dimensions of a piece—in a sense becoming part of it as they physically interact with it—is still a predominantly foreign concept contrasted with the preciousness of a [an arguably] still pervasive Modernist ideology informing contemporary readings of the visual arts. Central to the successful functioning of both *Freakshow: Performing Secrets* and *Reeler Than Real* is the provision of a platform for the creation of multiple, indefinite signification. Fundamental to the functioning of this process is the active participation of the visitor. As opposed to the passive role assumed by the viewer of a more conventional exhibition—whereby, at its polar extreme, the viewer absorbs the overriding prescriptions and moral codes prescribed by an autonomous author—this piece encourages the birth of

burgeoning multifaceted readings that exist in dialogue with the visitor whose participation, crucially, informs and articulates the signification process. Multiple concepts are able, thereby, to exist simultaneously and/or in succession and, possibly, in either or both a linear and circular fashion—due, overtly, to the persistent quashing of determinacy that the piece invites. The visitor, then, performs both a critical, interpretive action as well as a creative one through the blurring of the boundaries between artist as dominant creator and author of meaning and visitor as passive receiver of predetermined ideas. Although the role both Nigel and I play as authors are not neutralised or reversed, they *are* informed and mediated through the active role the visitor plays in the continued articulation of signification encouraged in this work.

THE GAZE AND AUTHORSHIP

Since this work was birthed of a working relationship with my friend and collaborator Nigel Gedge, a further need to confront the issue of authorship has arisen. This problem is multifaceted in itself. Although I conceived the presentation of the piece and the manner in which its performativity functions in dialogue with the spectator—and despite the fact that I have physically created the vast majority of the installation, Nigel's involvement is fundamental, not only with regard to the ideas informing its final realisation, but by the basic fact that it simply would not have existed without him. What began as a series of instances of themed representation—orchestrated through my visits where I appeared—more often than not—outfitted for a 'photo shoot'—developed into a considered series of conceptual narratives that were always inextricably tied to the physical limitations we were faced with. The challenge lay in weaving together a complex matrix of issues—the orchestration of a series of shots, each distinctive yet conceptually and visually linked, that presented a logical progression of considered intention and collaboration. We worked, each week, on reconfiguring the space to vivify it and imbue it with freshness—this product of presentation itself an undeniable contradiction of the mundane certainty that Nigel—and the worlds we share—are inextricably informed by the carceral nature of his existence. Although I positioned the camera for Nigel, he moderated my behaviour, placement and pose prior to each shot. In this sense he was an active and deliberate photographer. After we had taken a series of images, we would go over them together and assess which images we thought we could use and which were discard material. Once the shoot was over for that day, we would edit the photographs, Nigel dominant in the act of naming each image in a consecutive narrative set we collaboratively conceived. Nigel and I created these worlds, and in that sense we authored the images that gave rise to the show. Although we created vast numbers of images through a process of constructing a photographic narrative, in no sense did we intend to set prescriptive limits on the interpretation of these images—particularly as they were displayed for the installation. Scattered randomly throughout the space, their narrative structure was unsettled and their continuity further disrupted through the fact that they were presented unaccompanied by text. The action of the physical movement of people through the space meant that, since the majority of the images covered the floor space, their connotations continued to be disrupted through the physical trafficking of visitors and the resultant continuing interpretation. In this sense their meaning remained fluid. Furthermore, they always existed in dialogue with the frames whose conceptual weight derived from the comparisons and contrasts they conjured for me during their creation and the meaning that resulted through further deliberation and interpretation on the part of the

viewer. This ‘snowballing’ effect of meaning articulation was informed on a more complex level through the visual imaging occurring each time a viewer participated in the interactive performativity the frames were designed to invite.

The complex functioning of the gaze in this piece is, in fact, a necessary and deliberate factor informing the exponential nature of this signification process. The burgeoning effect of the act of looking was birthed, perhaps ironically, within the confines of Nigel’s room in a rest home where he experiences little to no contact with the outside world other than the limited interactions he has with his carers—the majority of which are hospital staff paid to take care of the seriously ill and aged. When I began working for Nigel he was living in a flat with his mother who, up until mid 2007 when she took sick and subsequently passed away, had been his primary carer and source of contact with the outside world. He remained, as he does now, bedridden and unable to sit up, with the partial use of one of his arms which, with the assistance of a specially adapted keyboard and mouse and the careful angling of his head and shoulders in such a way that he is able to view the computer monitor, he is able to surf the World Wide Web, write short sentences through typing with one finger and control the mouse to achieve pointing and clicking. It is through the use of the latter that he has discovered the ability to take photographs with webcam software—which he began doing soon after I started visiting him as a carer. Not long after we met Nigel asked if he was permitted to take a photograph of me. I agreed and it was during the infancy of our friendship that we began to develop an understanding of one another. Nigel experiences a rather severe speech impediment and it emerged that through working with the camera in a primarily visual language, we were able to breach the boundaries otherwise limiting our communication through conversing with words. The act of looking, then, soon developed as a primary mode of communication between us and this directly influenced the inception and conceptualisation of *Reeler Than Real*.

As people whose bodies have been variously and repeatedly marked as imperfect, as disabled—as other than the normalised stereotype apparently consistent with the majority, both Nigel and I have had to negotiate our positions on the representation of our bodies as primary markers of our selves and our agency. Throughout our lives and singularly, as this blanket of passivity has been thrown over us, isolating us through the incarceration of our identities as *errant*—as bodies whose difference is appropriated to define us, we have negotiated the rugged terrain necessary to reclaim our identity so as to rearticulate ourselves as agents determinate over the use of our bodies as primary sites of our individuality. The operation of the gaze is—and here I speak for myself—the primary device of control utilised in this othering process—as it functions to isolate, mark, diminish, contain and control [my] purpose, representation and agency through the operation of homogenizing preconception whose foundation is cemented in hierarchy. Crucial to this work, however, is the manner in which this limited positioning of the gazing lens is appropriated—altering fixed notions of agency as the work turns the camera back on the viewer—to speak back to them in a process of interpolation as they are invited to participate in our worlds. The frames, therefore, function as transgressive lenses, as deliberately constructed devices that problematize reductive machinations of the gaze. Comprising a Pandora of jaded yet pervasive stereotypical representations of the variously constructed, bound body, they speak back to the visitor, inviting interplay through polysemic signification that operates as challenge masked in playful irony. The exponential nature of this compounded morphing gaze is exemplified through the fact that not only are the *visitors* viewed interacting in our space—a space that was born in cramped conditions and shared experientially

by two—but a record is taken thereof. These images were hung within the space, providing further representations of this refracting, multiplying gaze and, on many occasions, the visitors left with their own copy. These inevitably contained—accompanying the Subject/Object^v of another's gaze—the bricolaged signification marking the inception and progression of this work and represented, as it were, the othering gaze gone awry as singularity of both lens and author is obscured. The irony of the refracting gaze is further ameliorated through the fact that the signification of the frames operates on various levels of ironical critique. Interestingly, the most popular frame—chosen for its bright colours and playful props—represented the grotesquery associated with extreme gender stereotyping and the accompanying extremes of physical disfigurement. Whilst some visitors avoided the lewd overtones of the frame, it, together with the ‘insect’ frame satirizing the morphing of human and animal forms, continued as the most popular frame choices throughout the show.

BODY AND IDENTITY: THE LINK TO AUTHORSHIP

During the process of presiding over the installation—and particularly during the opening night when Nigel’s physical presence inhabited the space, the issue of his presence and agency as photographer emerged. It was mentioned to me on more than one occasion that the reading of the work might have been enhanced further through attention being drawn to the fact that Nigel photographed the images on display. This issue resonates particularly with the factors informing the agency and representation of the disabled body. Without it being said in so many words—or rather, in so many words to *me*—the attendees that were aware of Nigel’s involvement in the work and voiced the feeling that overt reference to Nigel’s authorship—as a disabled man—may have further enriched appreciation of the work. This begs the question: is it due to Nigel’s status as a disabled man that knowledge of his agency becomes particularly problematized? One cannot step outside of the lens this question poses since Nigel *is* disabled—his triumph over his perceived restrictions indicating the presence of the still dominant ideology that presumes special mention should be made of instances where the disabled body is represented as operating successfully within the prescribed infrastructure of the presumed abilities of the non-disabled, unmarked body.

REASSESSMENT, CHANGES AND THE RELATIONSHIP TO IDEOLOGY

After two days of gauging the way the work was functioning in the space relative to the visitor’s reactions and level of participation, I felt that it was necessary to make some changes, particularly to enhance its interactive platform. The first change I made after closing the doors on Thursday afternoon was to paint, impromptu, the invitation: “Make Your Mark” across the front of the red fabric tent in large white letters to make overt the message that traces of one’s presence and interaction with the work are invited as, thus far, only the boldest visitors had been engaging on a tangible, physical level. This was a difficult decision to make since the issue of textual incorporation seems [to me] to necessarily introduce the type of prescriptive imperatives I have been trying to avoid, in order to encourage the practice of finding non-logocentric signifiers to encourage

physical engagement whose record remains traceable after the fact. During the planning of this work—and extending halfway through its showing, I chose to employ minimal prescriptiveness—so as to gauge the level of prompting that would be necessary for successful viewer participation to occur. The relativity and continual articulation of the latter is a crucial element driving the dialogue between the performance cycle and the critical direction of the thesis, its extrapolation a fundamental whose only constant remains its indeterminate variegation and inscrutability. One of the central goals of this thesis is to explore ways in which performative actions can be encouraged in the viewer/visitor that remain as uncontrived and unpracticed as possible. The fact remains, however, that these works are introduced into a society governed by multiple social restrictions and hegemonies that typically inhibit the singularity such actions might imply—in keeping with the ideological structure that limits challenge, difference and the potential for polysemic articulation. Possibility for deviation from the standard behavioural and conceptual signification practices is thereby stunted, this possibility becoming anchored within a matrix of homogenously informed actions leading to social exclusion and moral judgement. Language, too, as a direct informer and representative of the status quo, predominates in a society of reified slogans and recycled idioms that remain underlined, largely, by an economic ruler. It is particularly susceptible to trite reductionism whose meaning subsides in seemingly inverse proportion to its proliferation. Crucially, the focus of my thesis is on the nature of the effectiveness of non-logocentric performativity and spectatorial engagement on a visually-focused and performative platform—for the purposes of interrogating the possibilities of articulating alternative representations of agency circumscribed by the containment and limits of the bounds of—and bounded—body. The success, therefore, of identifying these emerging manifestations of meaning that promise improvement and separation from carceral ideological forces is as imperative as the process of exposing and undermining them. These two processes exist within a synchronic, dynamic relationship informing performance and its theory—that is woven from the threads of tangible, contextualised experiential containment.

Gedge, Nigel. Personal Interview with Sarah 2, 22 May 2008

This work focuses on a large number of shots you have taken of Sarah over quite a long period of time. How did this develop and how does it influence the way you see her?

The project started basically when I discovered that Sarah was an arts student and I have always been interested in art. The thought of being able to put something on some paper via my computer really appealed to me. Luckily it appealed to her as well. As we worked on the photo's I saw that Sarah was a brilliant young artist in her own right and our combination of ideas have fortunately worked well together. I have really enjoyed it and hopefully so has she. Also, I am really hoping our collaboration can carry on because it's really great. I haven't really done anything like this before.

Can you talk a little bit about the photo shoots and how they happen/come together?

What began for me as a simple shoot of Sarah soon developed into quite a few mind-boggling ideas, some of which were thought up by her, others by me. And thanks to Sarah's creative dressing we were able to put our ideas into practice.

Were there any shoots that were particularly memorable?

Well first of all the "sports" shoot was rather amazing—turned her itself into a boy...and the "Little Miss Mafia" one was brilliant. The way she acted, she assumed the poses so well. Both of the ones where she fed the nudes through the shredder were great. The most recent "secretary" one portrayed a woman with two different personalities--well that's what I THOUGHT anyway. The most over-the-top and hilarious one was when she dressed up as a huhu grub and started to eat me on my bed. Take from that what you will—and just before I wind up there is a question—I would say the schoolgirl one and the animal activist/terrorist on—where she saved a gorilla—were my top two faves. But enough about my ideas, your opinion matters a lot too. So, all I can say is, enjoy!

The work looks at travel, which usually requires a lot of moving around. What are your thoughts on travel and how do your travel experiences intersect with those of other people you know?

The work deals with travel but in a rather humorous and outrageous way although there are one or two instances that are almost "normal"--whatever that is! I used to travel all around the North Island of New Zealand with my mother and believe me, you would not believe the things that we saw. The extra low flying skyhawk fighter jets at the airport base almost caused mum to duck under the car, she got such a fright, although it was very humorous afterwards!

We saw the QEII at Auckland Harbour and it made the pier look very small indeed. We also travelled to some of the most relaxing and scenic places I have ever seen like the Bay of Islands in the Far North to Mount Ruapehu in the middle and finally the coastal region from Palmerston North to Wellington with snow on the hills on one side and the ocean on the other side— it really takes some believing. So, I suppose you could say fact can be stranger than fiction and also fiction can sometimes appear to be more real than fact. If you look at Sarah dressed up as a boy you will see what I mean.

How do you relate to images of travel that are shown to you by other travellers?

The fact that I am able to share my travels with people from all over the world, that really means a lot to me. I mean, normally the outrageous experiences we have are confined to our world and to the pictures I take with my camera. That used to be limiting, I mean, the sorts of things that I was able to shoot. When Sarah arrived with a new idea of a new place we could adventure to in our minds, that meant that we didn't have those same restrictions suddenly. It meant that we could travel anywhere really. Then when she made up the frames based on the worlds we had created and put them up for exhibiting, people from all over the world who visited The Arts Centre, in our corner within another little corner of the world in Christchurch became part of our world and participated in our way of seeing things, and boy oh boy some of things are pretty crazy and very special. I feel like a traveller of the world now.

How do you feel about the fact that the viewer is taking part in (y)our world?

I think that it's great that the public have chosen to come back into our world and look at it through our

eyes.

Any last thoughts?

Well I think that my mother, Joyce Mavis Gedge, 1918-2007 would really and truly have loved this. She always said if you feel you can do something, do it. Sadly she died November 10th last year after a short illness and well, like I said, if she could be here, I think she would be just as impressed as everyone else will hopefully be.

Reeler than Real Notes

ⁱ The signification used here not only points to commonly recognizable images with a localized (New Zealand) flavour—such as Buzzy Bees, ‘Kiwi Ingenuity’ and the ‘Southern Man’—but also to other ideological systems that prevail within the West. The latter might materialize in the construction of the perfect women's body revered in the image of the Supermodel or of the myth of Success as Celebrity evidenced in the simulacra of idealized cultures epitomized through the key players of Hollywood—amongst other indices of a ‘civilized’ Culture.

ⁱⁱ Note: All four Performances of the unNameable reference cultural and political constraint on the body. The process I have employed performatively in order to seek spaces beyond this oppressive prescription in order to encourage alternate articulations involves: primary focus on reductive referents that masquerade as signifieds subject to the creation of unlimited meaning and, in so doing, acknowledgement of the canker of their constraints. Once these have been exposed the problematization and undoing of signification follows. Logically, movement through these confines to locate and inscribe alternative meaning that impacts on the lived experiences of those engaging with the work should hopefully ensue. *Freakshow I and II* were the first performances in the series and concentrated on directly locating and exposing the containment and representation of the constrained body in two very physical pieces that directly implicated viewer complicity on both a conceptual and corporeal level. *Reeler than Real* moves into a more physically subtle and ideologically complex form of engagement whereby the visitor is invited to participate on a number of levels. The parodic suggestions are more prolific and complex and engage the viewer more directly, emphasizing the creation of images representing the experience of the body in relation to its context and locale.

ⁱⁱⁱ Note: These ideas originated as a series of observations of visitor responses and changes I made during the course of the installation.

^{iv} The issue of explaining the meaning of one's work is complex and highly problematic as, already, on the simple level of codification, if the signification of a primarily visually and spatially related work is to a large degree inaccessible and requires supportive texts for its meaning to emerge, one is compelled to question whether the work operates successfully as a visual, sculptural, conceptually engaging environment.

^v This very dualism, integral to the construction of the bound body, is deliberately highlighted and problematized in this work.



Above: *WISH: About Spaces* Publicity Poster

Wish: About Spaces

—*A performance presented by Sarah Forgan in collaboration with Irvine Forgan and Louise Kerr*

—*Soundtrack by Danny Knight-Baré*

—*Performance 3 of the Cycle of Performing the unNameable*

Wish: About Spaces [hereafter referred to as *WISH*] is a multimedia, interactive performance piece sprung from a critical multi-disciplinary creative approach designed to challenge conventions that seek to perpetuate limitations whose continued existence are manifest through conservative, reductive aesthetic and ideological constraints. These bonds are premised on dualisms that perpetuate the divide between performer and spectator, 'whole' and 'fragmented' bodies, 'Reality' and 'art', logic and creativity.

This is the third event to emerge in a four-performance cycle that challenges commonly tolerated representations of the bound body and focuses on finding new forms of articulation that necessitate confrontation of conventional performative practices through direct involvement with audiences with a view to active participation. Placed third within this performance series, *WISH* is informed by its predecessors, taking the initiative to further explore and utilize a variety of innovative devices to engage the viewer to a greater extent, propelling them into the role of both fellow performer and creative collaborator. Due to its experimental and generative nature that speaks back to conservative representative forms, this work, intended for debut in 2009, is constructed particularly with the Fringe context and audience in mind in the hope that the expansive and progressive atmosphere of the Festival will allow for a generous response. Since the festival is reputedly experimental and innovative, it would provide a context where the work can be properly understood and beneficially articulated—in contrast to the generally more conservative and taciturn participatory behaviour of other more conventional artistic and performance platforms.

Freakshow: Performing Secrets—the first in the series debuted at the Dunedin Fringe 2006—challenged the viewer to examine, overtly, their complicity in the visceral, tortured incarceration of the externally othered, criminalized body and its direct relation to an extrapolated ideological complicity. More recently, in response to and in transgression of the limitations imposed through profound physical disability, the collaborative work *Reeler Than Real* was birthed. Initiating from the practice of finding alternative photographic representations to those more commonly recognized as typical of an oppressed physical and, concomitantly, ideological state, the work was installed at The Arts Centre, Christchurch in June 2008. Operating as a highly ironized interactive sculptural platform of multiple possible worlds, its playfulness renegotiated the gaze through actively involving the visitor on a number of levels of performativity burlesqued.

In a bolder more daring fashion, *WISH* focuses the content of the piece and the central performative actions onto the viewer/subject as it engages them—interpolating them into the work. Here the visitor determines the level of the work's success and functionality on a more overt level than its predecessors as they are asked to join directly into the spirit of the piece. The visitor is presented with a platform where they are urged to examine the constraints they perceive to be claustrophobically binding an aspect or perhaps even the entirety of themselves. These bonds are, significantly, those that are internally or personally experienced,

though their source may emerge from any level of limitation—be it physical, emotional, ideological, a combination or perhaps even a fragmentation thereof. The source and articulations of these numerous collective constraints are not the primary issues informing this work. Rather, the mechanism of suppression is highlighted with a view to purging these ties within an interactive non-judgemental non-invasive arena. This culmination manifests through a series of actions performed interactively with a collective audience through a process of transferral to gifted sculptural objects and facilitated through the context and actions introduced and maintained by our small, responsive, performance troupe.

WISH: About Spaces

Conceptual Introduction

WISH: About Spaces is comprised of two distinct phases that are conceptually and physically linked yet occur in succession and in two distinct physical spaces. It is an unscripted performance in the sense that the performers initiate a series of consecutive actions according to predetermined guidelines whose purpose and function is clear. These actions however, do not exist outside of audience response and it is through participation with the crowd that the work attains articulation. The manner in which the performance unfolds is directly contingent on the manner in which the barriers are broken down between spectator and performer and the level at which each visitor becomes actively involved in its continued creative expression. In this sense the work is experimental and daring since its outcome is largely unknown—a feature typically encouraged at fringe events such as the Dunedin Fringe festival. Unlike street performance—where the audience member has likely had experience with some form of street theatre and the type of interaction that is involved—this work seeks to explore new ground regarding participation and collaboration with the public since its media and mode of expression are unusual and not, as far as the artist is aware, commonly manifest in New Zealand. The actions and physicality of the work are peculiar to the artist's style and while, for example, utilization of the largely unspoken gestures can be compared to a rich and varied performance inheritance of mute performativity, it is the variety of additional elements such as the use of puppets and the introduction of unfinished sculptural forms, whose heterogeneity is designed through further active participation, which work together to imbue the work with a unique and distinct style. Since the proportions of the work are directly informed through audience response, the unscripted outcome of the piece means that the performers are challenged to maintain structure whilst also allowing for creative outpouring on the part of the public participant. The extent of the latter is left entirely up to the individual—the work is designed to complement and gift the viewer with the satisfaction of a unique and edifying experience and this is primarily sought through creating a unique performative platform where spectator and performer, artist and critic, meld together and remain in continued dialogue with the piece, even after the second phase is completed. Since the work emerges from a variety of media and artistic backgrounds, it is designed to maintain a sense of originality whilst simultaneously complementing the diversity of other pieces in the Festival.

ACTION OUTLINE

Space

Correctly chosen contextually relevant spaces are imperative to the work's success. Since this piece is designed for debut at the 2009 Dunedin Fringe Festival—the chosen spaces are situated in reasonably close proximity to the main action and events of the festival.

WISH was been accepted for inclusion in the Blue Oyster Gallery Fringe artist-hosting program. Phase 1 of the piece is will occur in this basement-like space of winding catacombs. Phase 2 of the piece necessitates use of a building or platform of a reasonable height that is located centrally to both the town and Fringe events to facilitate the launching of the parachutes that are distributed and recollected at the end of phase 1

ⁱ. The confining, basement-type area of the gallery space contrasts in an interesting fashion with the elevated structure of phase 2, emphasizing the sense of release the latter is designed to provide. Unlike the claustrophobic nature of *Freakshow I and II*, phase 1, although underground, provides enough of a clearing that the work can be accessed and exited easily by both performers and the participating audience. This is due to the performance requiring a reasonable amount of movement amongst the participants and also to allow people to enter and exit as they choose.



Above: Venue for *WISH*

Performers

There are 4 performers comprising the action of this piece. They are referred to as P1/Jester-Shaman (performer 1); P2/Boundman (performer 2); Clown; Musician

P1/Jester-Shaman: Facilitator in the passage of unleashing our shackles. Beneath her feathered muslin wrapper, she wears a white body stocking and any remaining flesh is also painted opaque white.



Left: Boundman walking through the Octagon, Dunedin; prior to the main gallery performance



Above: Shaman with Bird Puppet

P2/Boundman: Perpetually tied in ropes, radically physically inhibited yet never appears to despair to the point where cessation of movement or determination occurs. Should he come to a standstill, it is likely due to physical exhaustion rather than lack of volition. He remains tied throughout the duration of this phase of the performance, this commencing in a discreet fashion prior to the beginning of phase 1 in a public space earlier in the day. The end of phase 2 also includes the Boundman figure who will release his bonds in public, this signalling the end of *WISH*.

Clown: This figure remains rather stereotypical. She performs tricks, especially those that flaunt her physical skills and abilities such as juggling, acrobatics, balancing etc. She exists as contrasted figure and accompaniment to Boundman to complete a dualism of sorts—premised on the paradoxes and falsities that necessarily comprise such binaries e.g. free/bound tragic/comic. For the most part she accompanies Boundman as he performs his role whilst clowning simultaneously. At times she also interacts with P1, particularly when **crowd participation** is called for. Her face wears a permanent smile that is painted on as well as worn. However if Boundman should struggle too much, she assists him so that he can complete his desired action.

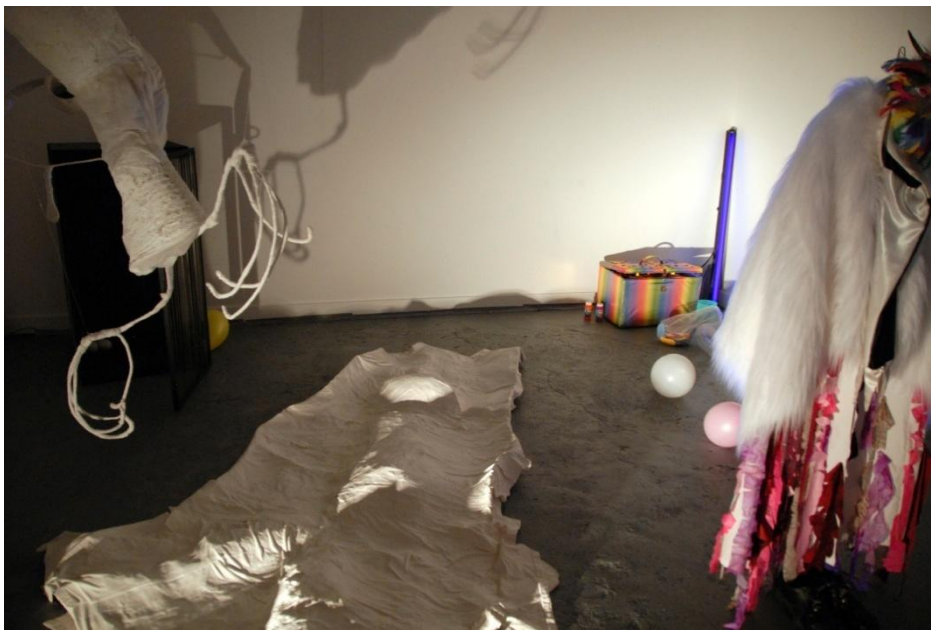


Left: Clown Engaging the Crowd



Above: Musician in Procession

Musician: This figure remains on the periphery of the action and creates sounds ranging between the genres of the carnivalesque/circus music and ‘melancholic existential’ with a dose of shamanic rhythm. If a suitable musician cannot be found for the performance, an electronic soundtrack should suffice as long as access to a PA system is possible. When the performers exit the gallery and transit to the Octagon, the musician plays an instrument to encourage them to follow the train of performers.



Left: *WISH* installation, Blue Oyster Gallery, Dunedin

Synopsis

The performance initiates through the self-binding process of Boundman, which occurs in a public space prior to the onset of phase 1.

Phase 1

Within the underground enclave of the gallery, forming a trail designed to lead the performers and participants around the space, reside a series of largely indefinable objects—these are designed to be lifted up to reveal the contents beneath, much like the lid of a serving tray. The largest, most centrally placed object [objA] is constructed from a negative cast that maps the contours of a body. Beneath this cast object lies P1, wearing a body stocking.

A second object [objB], resembling a magical box of secrets, resides in the space. This object can be opened and contains a mask of colourful bird feathers, a pair of jester's trousers, a collection of small lightweight windmills, two white bags and a few bottles of soap liquid with bubble blowing wands and some balloons. The first bag is filled with numerous blank finger-puppets. The second is filled with numerous blank miniature parachutes. Also to be found within the space, are a table and a few chairs.

Installed within the space from the ceiling are the uNBPⁱⁱ and a large headless, nude bird-woman puppet BWP.

A cage made of welded metal sits within the space.

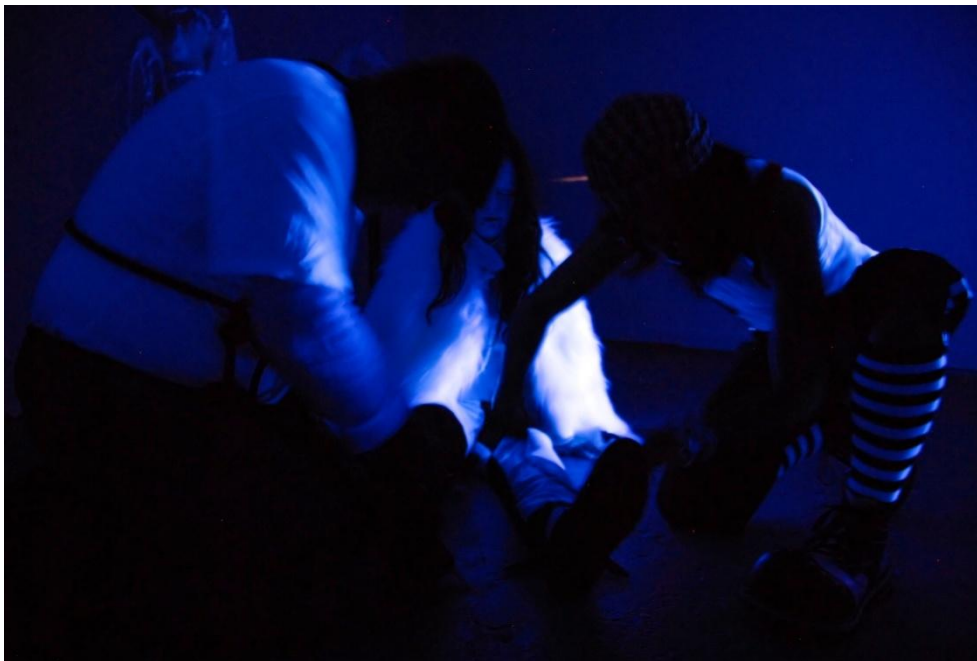
The lighting within the space consists of strong floodlights that cast dramatic shadows when reflected off the puppets.

STAGE:

Prior to the performance starting, the floodlights are lights are turned down and kept that way until the music begins, after which a UV light is turned on low, slowly increasing in intensity. The performance initiates through the start of music played by Musician and the entrance of Boundman, who has been standing amongst the crowd. His walk is slow, laboured and steady, his mien remaining focused yet insular and free of affectation as he makes his way towards the objA, the large body cast that covers P1. A short while after, Clown tumbles from within the cage, smiling and jolly, clowning in the manner she does best, making sure to regularly circumambulate Boundman. Her presence would not exist without either P1 or P2, signifying an extremity of the tragic/comic and free/bound dualisms—and is particularly informed by Boundman who may be seen to occupy the contrasting extremity.

When P2 reaches objA, he slowly lifts the cast cover, revealing P1 who has been lying mute, wrapped in muslin, beneath. He shows no apparent surprise—or if he should, this response is *never* affected in the least. As mentioned earlier, Boundman performs this and all ensuing actions to the best of his ability, assisted by Clown when the challenge proves too great—the latter maintaining her comic and light-hearted air throughout, even if a real physical struggle results. She is the buffoon whose jollity defies any calls to Reality, her smile perhaps morphing to the grotesque within a context of obvious struggle and discomfort on the part of Boundman. As the cover is removed, P1 begins to stir, slowly at first, then increases her pace as she stretches,

yawns and blinks awake, taking in her surroundings. She then proceeds to stretch her body outside of the confines of the body cast and begins unwinding her muslin wrapper, remaining in a state of awareness tempered with calmⁱⁱⁱ.



**Left: Shaman
Dressed by
Clown and
Boundman**

Whilst P1 is involved in this process, P2 makes his laboured way across to objB,

located close to objA. Clown may temporarily stray from his side but never for long and only to perform a trick that she may well be proud of. Boundman opens objB, again with assistance if necessary. These objects are placed directly on the ground and therefore may not prove to be within easy reach. This is to emphasize any difficulty in movement Boundman will be experiencing as a result of his constraints. Boundman lifts the lid and, gathering the attire beneath, makes his way back to P1 who should be completely dressed at this stage. He then proceeds to assist P1 in donning the garments, beginning with her mask, followed by her trousers and lastly, her wings. The emphasis on this action is that P1 requires assistance as she has not fully woken to this environment and so her movements are sleepy and slow. Boundman, of course, will experience difficulty in assisting her and it is the labour of this process that will emerge. Clown continues to assist and alternately clown as the situation requires of her. Lastly, Boundman collects the wrapped uNBP and hands it to P1 who accepts it, unwraps it and, after inserting her arm into the puppet, begins commandeering it, the two bird heads weaving together, undulating in and out of the crowd.



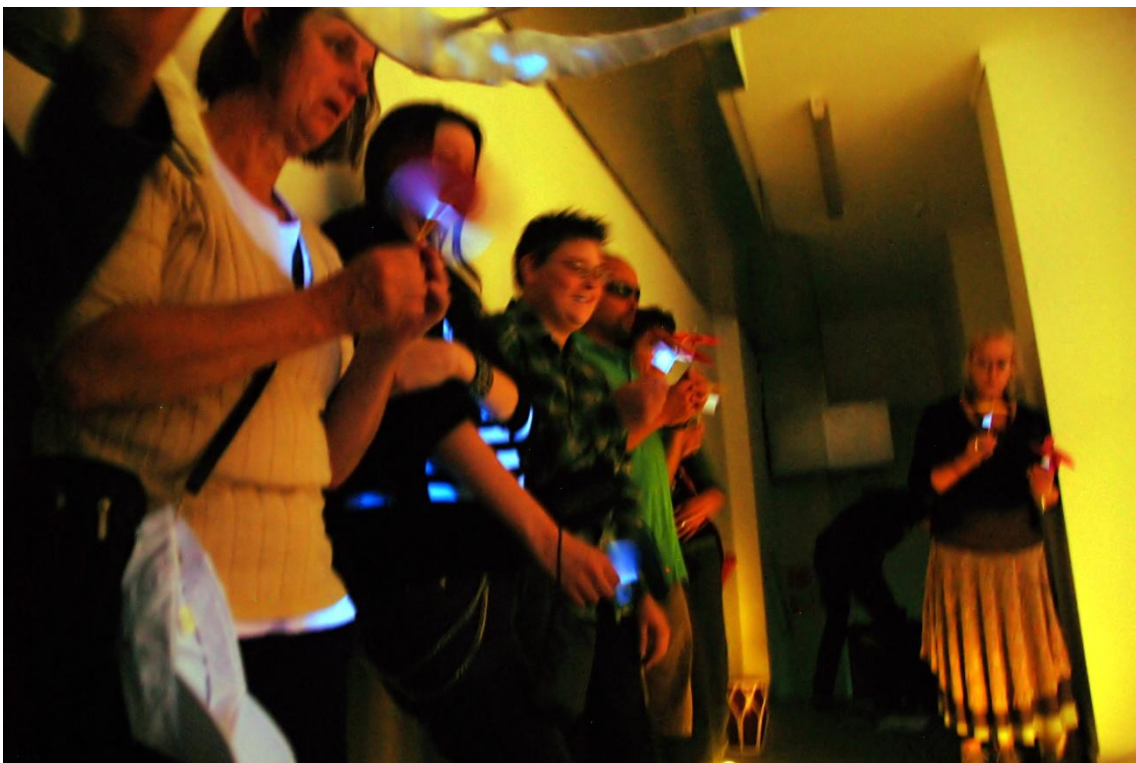
Above: Shaman Distributes Windmills

In the meantime, Boundman has moved towards objB and, opening it, reveals numerous paper windmills nestled within. Each windmill is made of lightweight materials and is designed to blow when held into the slightest breeze. Each windmill has a tag containing a message which invites the visitor to become actively involved in the performance through unburdening themselves of a perceived constraint—whether personal or social—through its symbolic transferral to an object, a miniature parachute whose launch will occur as a group event, facilitated by the performers, during phase 2 of *About Spaces*.

It is at this point that Clown, Boundman and Shaman coordinate their movements so that they converge at a designated point central to the action and the crowd in close proximity to objB, where Boundman should already be standing having opened it, revealing the windmills. It is hoped that the circling weaving puppeteering performed by P1 has begun to engage the crowd through creating a sense of interconnectedness that shall be further enhanced through the ensuing actions. Once these three performers have reached their common point, Boundman bends to the ground, gathers up the windmills and begins dividing them amongst the three of them. Again he is assisted by Clown, whilst P1 gathers her windmills and begins to blow them, drawing the crowd's attention to them. The three performers, led by P1 form a chain and weave into the crowd, handing out windmills to the observers. It is hoped that the crowd will be receptive and will not only accept the windmills but will feel encouraged to participate further by transferring their wishes to the parachutes that will be handed out to them later on—together with a finger puppet—to decorate during the final portion of *Phase 1*.

Once the windmills have been distributed, the chain of performers wind their way back through the crowd to the area where the objects are placed. Once again, this task is initiated through the shackled contained movements of Boundman, He bends down, opening objB, revealing the bottles of soap bubbles and wands, the balloons and the two white bags—one containing the blank miniature parachutes, the other the blank finger puppets. He hands P1 the bubbles and balloons—the latter which she immediately proceeds to inflate. Once

she has done one or two, she makes off into the crowd where she initiates a passing game with the balloons, drawing on them, batting them into the crowd, inviting response. This action is playful, highlighting the jester aspect of her persona and the magical nature of the shaman means that her actions incorporate an ethereal quality to her performance. This game is preceded by or followed with the action of blowing bubbles into the audience. It is important that P1 keeps moving, her undulations behaving as invisible threads that serve to engage all areas of the crowd whilst simultaneously imbuing them with a sense of connectedness. During this phase, **Clown** alternates in a helter-skelter fashion between partnering with both PI and Boundman. Whilst performing her own engaging tricks she also plays with the bubbles and balloons in order to **engage the crowd**, whilst occasionally returning to Boundman to assist him with his current burden—the parachutes and finger puppets.



Above: Crowd Engaged with Windmills

Whilst this is underway, Boundman has heaved the bag of finger puppets onto his person and busies himself by gloving each of his ten fingers with a puppet. This prepares him for his re-entrance into the crowd where he offers his shackled hands out to them, fingers splayed, inviting each person to take one. Once his hands are puppet-free, he re-gloves his fingers with another ten puppets and repeats the action. He is accompanied, closely, by Clown. As per the entire performance, this duo work as a pair. They direct the participants towards the table where P1 waits to receive them and assist them in the decoration—the application of signification to these blank objects, so that they become personalized—so that a connection is created between individual and object. The finger puppet is theirs to keep as a symbolic gift of their participation.

By this time, P1 has completed her interactive balloon and bubble

dance with the crowd and addresses them, inviting them to decorate their finger puppets in preparation for phase 2 of *WISH: About Spaces*.

A sudden shift occurs here. It is time for the wish-making process—the central motif of the piece. This is directed by the shaman figure of P1. She gathers up the parachute bag and leaves the room, moving into an alternate alcove of the gallery space. The Clown and the Boundman then lead the participants to see the shaman—where she waits as escort to next world of Possibility. Here they are encouraged to receive a parachute and make a wish. This is an intensely personal and private moment and the mood of the performance will shift according to the interaction of the participants. Once the wishmaking process is completed, the shaman gathers up the parachutes which will then become part of a collection of parachutes that will be released in phase 2 of the performance. The conceptual source for this object-based transferral is based on various pagan practices of sympathetic magic—whereby both traits and emotions felt by the individual are transferred to an object—the latter then treated in a particular way in order to overcome the constraints and concomitant inhibitions and limitations that are perceived as impinging on the freedom of that individual. For the purposes of this performance, participants are encouraged to isolate constraints and bounds that they perceive are connected to themselves in some way. These incarcerating elements are then physically and symbolically transferred to the parachute they receive^{iv}.

Phase 2

This phase succeeds phase 1—the exact timing of this is subject to discussion with the event organizers as the timing should correspond loosely with the daily time frames of Fringe performances. It is likely, however, to follow straight on from phase 1, the interim consisting of the physical movement of performers and participants to the venue of phase 2 as a crowd, led by the troupe^v.



Above: Shaman Leading Procession



Above: Clown in Procession



Left: Boundman and Visitor Procession

The primary action involves P1 who is viewed ascending the building. Boundman and Clown are also in attendance, carrying the large bag of parachutes completed during phase 1 of

WISH and a large headless puppet with sleeves and oversized bird-like legs. They dominate the space of the ground below P1's final resting place. P1 releases a long rope from the top of the building/platform and the puppet is attached by Boundman. P1 then hauls it up the side of structure and once she has retrieved it, sits it on her lap, slipping her arms into the sleeves attached to its body, her head occupying the position where its head should be. P1 then throws a second rope to Boundman and Clown, to which is attached the large bag of parachutes—which is also hauled up the building by P1^{vi}. Securing herself in a position visible to the crowd, and still attached to the large puppet, P1 begins to release the parachutes over the side of the building/platform—and releases them in a ritualistic purge of collective constraint, their accompanying WISHES floating through the air to the ground below. Boundman is situated on the ground at an estimated point where the parachutes are destined to fall^{vii}.

Musician is also located in close proximity to the action, providing a lyrical accompaniment to the unfolding performance.

Once this action has completed, P1, Boundman, Clown and Musician disappear from sight, melding into the crowd. At a later stage in an unannounced fashion, Boundman releases himself from his bonds at a place of his choosing within the public domain.

Note: All sculptures and objects that are released into the public domain—windmills, parachutes and puppets—are gifted to the crowd, the artist thereby relinquishing control over their future existence and functioning. This is one of many devices utilized in this interactive performance piece that breaks down the barriers between spectator and performer—problematizing fixities associated with 'high' and 'popular' art through inviting multiple subjectivities to mediate ideas of ownership and agency within the work. This mechanism—devised to challenge more conventional forms of artistic creation and display—is designed to function best in an avant-garde context such as the Fringe festival.

Promotion

WISH: About Spaces will be promoted through leafleting, postering, a press release and, through the official Fringe promotional material.

Reflections: An Afterword

Wish: About Spaces, as the final performance in the cycle of performing the unNameable was born from a place of acceptance, of knowing, of pain and of survival. It is, however, not a place of despair or desolation and gives no concession to the forces that continue to impinge on the embodied subject. It is born of extremes, of the farce and jollity of the Clown to the oppressive ties of the Boundman—two extremes that find existence in a polarized, hierarchical world that does not allow the abnormal body its due. But it is mediated through magic and the inception of a wish—to carve out other spaces, new spaces of identity and refiguration decided on one's own terms. This begins with hope and acceptance that in the extremes of the forces that subdue, that torment, that mock, incarcerate and scorn, there is also the space still available to laugh and to play. As long as there is play there is the possibility that the ghostly bird of the unNameable will continue to haunt the spaces of new meaning, carving out smoky portals of promise so that creativity and embodiment are given the chance to be celebrated. This was evidenced in *Wish*. The participants responded with enthusiasm and delight and actively engaged in the creation of a special and sacred space that acknowledged their collective potential to release and renew themselves. It was a space that was respectful and safe and open and this is surely the type of world—of place and possibility—that allows the abnormal and the unique acceptance.

Wish: About Spaces Notes

ⁱ Phase 2 of the performance eventuated in the launching of the wish parachutes from the Mayor's Balcony, located in the city Council building directly opposite the Octagon. Its situation was therefore central to the main action of the Fringe and accessible to busy foot traffic.

ⁱⁱ This refers to the skeletal white bird puppet representing the elusive concept of the uNnameable—a continuing motif informing a series of performances of which this is the ultimate.

ⁱⁱⁱ During the performance P1 struggled to emerge from beneath the cast and had to be assisted by both the Clown and Boundman.

^{iv} There are no images documenting this aspect of the performance. This is to protect the privacy of the participants engaged in the wishmaking process and follows in accordance with occupying the space of uncertainty where new meaning is articulated.

^v It did in fact succeed phase 1 directly.

^{vi} P1 was able to access the balcony via some stairs which was a far preferable outcome, since she required her legs and hands to puppeteer and hoist the parachutes. This is an example of numerous spontaneous decisions which are made in a largely unscripted performance.

^{vii} When the performance occurred, P1 required the assistance of the Boundman and the Clown in carrying the box of windmills while she puppeteered the skeletal bird puppet, leading the procession in the collective performance of the unNameable. Boundman assisted her in releasing the parachutes whilst Clown engaged the crowd, directing them to the action of the release of their wishes. In another act of spontaneity, she assisted the participants in the collection of the parachutes, which many proved very keen to keep.

Conclusion

As I watched the last of the parachutes sail down amongst the busy throngs of Dunedin's Octagon, bearing their precious wishes within the current of the new prevailing wind of fresh hope and possibility, I reflected on the immense journey I have taken in my exploration of the reconsideration of meaning. My reflection, this time, was able to look fondly on the tomes of logic I had combed so carefully to find reason for my place as initiator of this immense challenge I had undertaken. I could not know, only sense the difficulties that were ahead of me when I began, but it was a beginning charged with determination and absolute belief that there were other, more responsible and compassionate ways of refiguring the abnormal body—the body that has for so long been the bearer of invisibility and silence, the object of dispassion, cruelty and neglect, the absented other of the prevailing ethos of impossible perfection and uniformity—the real living body that feels pain and knows prejudice, wears stigma both in pride and humiliation—the beautiful experiential body whose continued existence alone defies the threat of incarceration always ready to devalue, ignore, neglect, injure, torture, reject and ultimately destroy it.

This body, this receptacle of persistent marginalization, had taken me on a journey of discovery, whereby I learnt the horrors of torture and the concomitant ideological manipulations driven by the dishonesty, greed, pride and brutality of governing forces whose response to the body is one founded on violence, dominance, and ultimately, destruction. The body of carceral suffering exists, too in the everyday lives of those marked as disabled, disfigured, diseased and, ultimately, differentiated to the point of disappearance—its *dissidence* of difference too threatening for established archaeologies of power to tolerate. The animal body, the criminal body, the body marked as disabled arises from the ethos that constructs and absents it—its very existence dependent entirely on this ideology of imbalance, of hierarchical control, to sustain it. And here lies one of the primary discoveries of this journey—this body of difference does not, in fact, have to exist. Its agency, its authority, its very identity is one that continues to rely on the world of intolerance that birthed it as a cultural entity. If one were to search for an essence of meaning for the body one would not necessarily be wrong to do so. Not wrong so much as unwise. For to do so is to deny this body that is and only can be unique and individuated through its physicality, through its abnormality. This body that is reliant and contingent and dependent on the way that it is treated, affected, spectated, tolerated, visualized, attended and tended. A consideration of its social, political and cultural context is the only essential required to give back to the body that deserves tolerance respect and consideration. A body that has grown tired on its incarceration, of struggling against the ties that bind it, the voice that mocks it and the eyes that cruelly judge and devalue it.

As I stood in the afternoon sun, I reflected on the shamanic turn that I had taken on the final paths to reconsider the meaning of the visually imagined body. And this time, my reflections were not grounded in the logic that had necessarily accompanied me along the way—this had been re-placed by a profound, almost overwhelmingly affective response. This was of the same ilk that had warmed my heart when the spectators wept during *Freakshow: Performing Secrets*, when they posed amongst the parodic frames that emerged from my collaboration with my dear friend Nigel in *Reeler than Real*; when the visitors to the ceremony of wish-making in *Wish: About Spaces* so ardently participated in the reconfiguring of a better future. This profound

affect had woven its way around and through the barrage of brutality, the walls of intolerance and the cruelty of mockery, neglect and indifference. This attending to the marked, embodied subject showed a responsibility, an accountability, a sharing in the creation and experience of the meaning of embodiment through accepting their complicity as a collective in the process of making meaning about the body and where it comes to rest on the now tired scale of distinction. This shared accountability had broken through the seemingly impenetrable spectacle of shame that could only ever demand a confessional of wrongs that can never come close to being righted. Forgiveness through the process of confession embodies yet another spectacle of control whereby a response of guilt is forcefully elicited from a subject not always willing or ready to take responsibility for their actions. Forcing the truth through coerced confessional is premised on guilt, fear and violence—the same factors initiating a culture of difference, governed by a dialectic punctuated by deferral of responsibility and the imposition of blame.

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